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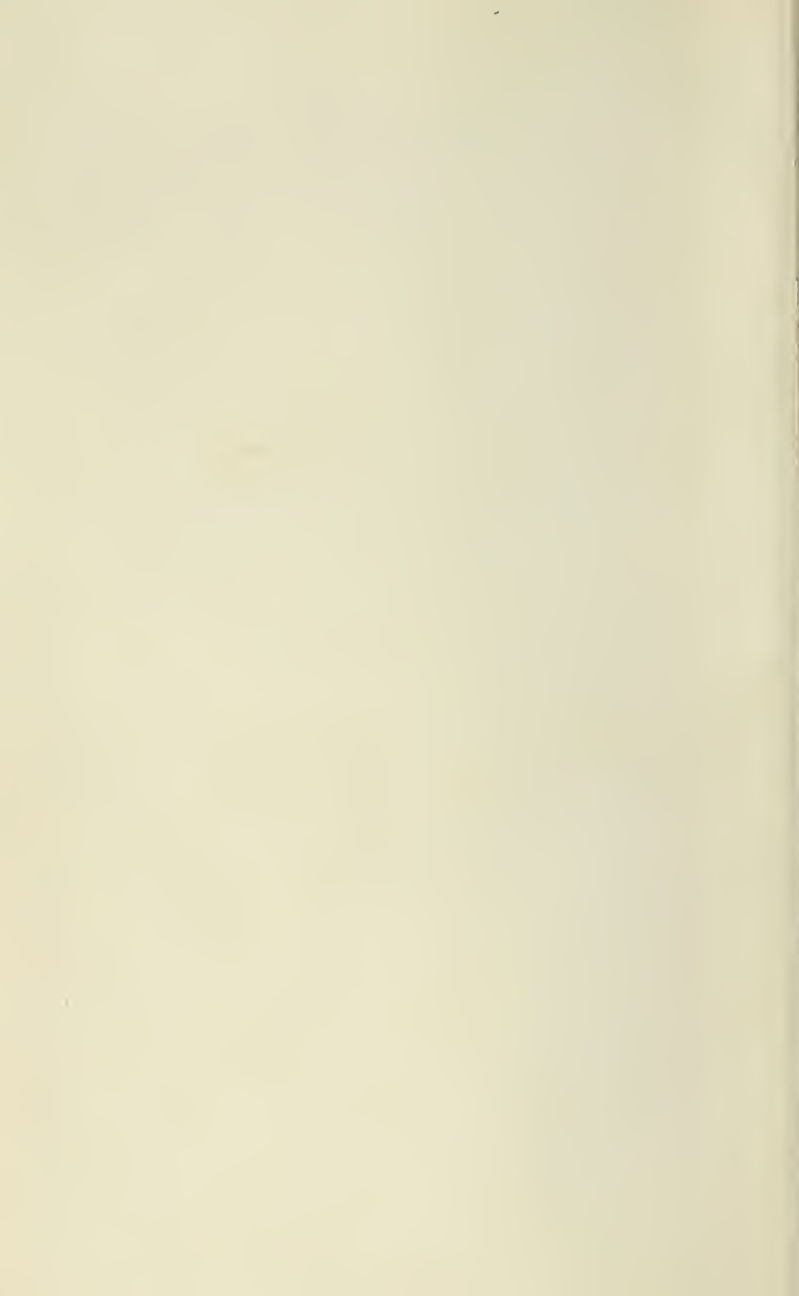
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HISTORY
OF THE
PRINCIPAL STATES OF EUROPE
FROM THE
PEACE OF UTRECHT.

LONDON

PRINTED BY S. AND R. BENTLEY, DORSET STREET.

John Russell Russell

HISTORY
OF THE
PRINCIPAL STATES OF EUROPE
FROM THE
PEACE OF UTRECHT.

Non tamen adeo virtutum sterile sæculum ut non et bona
exempla prodiderit.

TACITUS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
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1826.

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HISTORY
OF THE
PRINCIPAL STATES OF EUROPE,
FROM THE
PEACE OF UTRECHT.

BOOK THE FIRST.

CHAPTER I.

State of France after the Peace of Utrecht. Disputes of the Jansenists and Jesuits. Will of Lewis the XIVth. His Death. His Character.

THE period of which I am about to treat, is not one of those remarkable æras, signalized by bloody wars, or sudden revolutions, by great national changes, or moving feats of individual heroism. It is a time which, to the superficial observer, may appear stagnant and uninteresting, abounding with petty intrigues, rather than general contests, and affording at best more examples of the cautious and pacific temper which provides for the happiness of existing generations, than of the boldness and enterprize which administer food to history. Yet in this tame and tranquil age, are to be found events and circumstances, over which a political observer may meditate not without advantage. He may mark the means by which a new dynasty was consolidated, and an ancient throne undermined; he may trace in one country the slow suicide of arbitrary power, in another the firm growth of rational freedom; and if the

ordinary reader regret the absence of those black crimes and bright virtues, which give to true narrative the interest of fiction, he who seeks for improvement in the study of past ages, will find no period more pregnant with examples of wisdom to imitate, of folly to avoid, and of vice to loathe.

The peace of Utrecht put an end to the miseries of war in Europe, and, to use the expression of the Duke of Saint Simon, saved France. Lewis the Fourteenth had no longer to dread the presence of an enemy in his capital, or the cruel alternative of being obliged to dethrone his grandson by his own arms.

The foreign affairs of his reign, after this time, may be comprized in a few words. In order to evade the stipulations of the treaty with England, which compelled him to fill up the port of Dunkirk, he made a canal at Mardyke, and persisted in continuing the work in spite of all remonstrance.*

* It has been said that when Lord Stair remonstrated on this subject, Lewis replied, "M. l'Ambassadeur, j'ai toujours été le maitre chez moi, souvent chez les autres, ne m'en faites pas souvenir." Voltaire denies credit to this anecdote, on the authority of M. de Torcy, who said he was always present when the King saw Lord Stair, and could recollect nothing of it. On the other hand, the story is told by Duclos, who had good opportunities of knowing, and who adds, that Lord Stair, on telling the story observed, "La

When Queen Anne died, Lewis with a perseverance, which does more honour to his spirit than his good faith, endeavoured to promote the views of the Pretender. All he was able to effect, however, amounted to no more than obtaining a loan of 400,000 crowns from the King of Spain, which helped to furnish means for the rebellion of 1715. Before the issue was known, the King of France was no more.

If the short remainder of his life passed without foreign war, Lewis had sufficient matter for anxiety in the state of his country, his court, and family. The nation was utterly exhausted by the expenses of a ruinous contest, and depressed by the misfortunes which had happened in the course of it. The miseries of the people formed a striking and sad contrast to the magnificence of the court. The war had been marked by the falling off of the revenue, the distress of the merchant, and the grinding of the poor, while the nobility and the clergy, exempt from nearly all the taxes, left the greater burden to be supported by the industrious classes of the community. Recruits for the army

State of
France.

vieille machine m'impose." But Lord Stair's *Journal*, published in the *Hardwicke Papers*, does not mention any audience that he had with Lewis the Fourteenth on this, or indeed any other subject,* after his first presentation at court, and thus confirms Voltaire.

were conducted to the frontier chained together like malefactors.* Peace brought but little relief. English travellers who visited France, found nothing but beggary and rags: deserted towns, ruined houses, and an impoverished people.† The Duke of Argyll declared in the English House of Lords, that he had traversed France, and had never seen a country so exhausted both of men and money; he affirmed, that for forty miles together he had not seen a man capable of bearing arms.

Two years after the conclusion of the Treaty of Utrecht, none of the benefits of peace had been perceived; the nation bore their distress with patience, but their apathy was, in the eyes of many, a presage of the decline of the kingdom.‡

The
Court.

If the Court exhibited an appearance of splendour little in conformity to the state of the people, it, at the same time, formed a melancholy contrast to its former self. While the outward trappings, the hours and the attendance, the journeys and the homage, remained the same, the spirit which had animated Versailles in days of glory was utterly departed. The palace and its precincts no longer

* Duclos, t. i.

† Guardian, No. 102.

‡ Forbonnais Recherches et Considérations sur les Finances de France, tom. v. p. 64.

displayed to the admiring eyes of natives and of foreigners, a king elate with pride, which his successes seemed to justify; a numerous and splendid family surrounding the throne, and a glorious train of followers, where Condé and Turenne, Bossuet and Fenelon, Racine and Boileau, might be distinguished in a crowd of illustrious courtiers; the brilliant elements of a society where a magnificent sovereign presided, and where Montespan and Sévigné added the lustre of beauty and wit, to the celebrity of arms and letters. Now all was changed: Lewis, deprived in his old age of his son and his grand-children, and shorn of the fame which attended his former wars, divided his time and his power between a clandestine queen and a bigoted confessor. The pomp of the Court ceremonies seemed like wedding dresses upon bodies about to be consigned to their graves; Madame de Maintenon herself was gloomy and unhappy—"I am old," she writes, "sad, and weary of the world. I am nothing but a living skeleton. I can scarcely see; I hear still worse; I am not myself understood, for my pronunciation is gone with my teeth; my memory begins to fail, and our misfortunes, joined to my age, make me cry like all other old women." In the palace, nothing seemed to be attended to but a continual

and minute devotion; even that was hollow and affected: nothing was real but weariness, disgust, and misery.

In the midst of this general gloom, occasioned by the public and private misfortunes, as well as the declining age and bigoted superstition of the king, there were two causes which contributed to give a deeper hue to the melancholy of Lewis. The first of these was the contest subsisting between the Jesuits and Jansenists; a question which had occupied with serious, or rather ridiculous disputes, the early part of the reign of Lewis.

Jesuits
and Jan-
senists.

There are some questions so concealed in the shades of metaphysics, that the wit of man has never yet been able to throw upon them a clear and indisputable light. Like objects seen in a dream, they deceive the mind; and when we imagine that we have grasped them, we find nothing in our hold but images, to which we endeavour in vain to affix an accurate and intelligible shape. Ages pass without approaching nearer to their solution; generations of men of the highest intellect leave them obscure and unsatisfactory as they found them. Such subjects would seem to be reserved for another state of being, and only opened in part, in order to confound the pride of human understanding, and check the presumption of all-daring science. Of this kind is the problem of

liberty and necessity; which, after all that has been said and written, has been left by the wisest metaphysicians to be decided by the internal feeling given us by nature, that we are responsible beings; and however controlled by circumstances, have it always in our own power to avoid the consciousness of crime. This great question, so long a subject of dispute in the schools, did not begin to disturb the church of Christ till the commencement of the fifth century; when a monk of the name of Morgan went from Great Britain to the East, and entered into a controversy with a zealot, newly converted from the Manichæan heresy.* From this time the partisans of the monk, whose name, turned into Greek, became Pelagius, and of the convert, who was the celebrated St. Augustine, divided the Christian world: the names of Molina, the Spanish Jesuit, of the Arminians in Holland, of Jansen, Bishop of Yprès, are familiar to all the readers of modern history. In France the heat of the quarrel seemed to abate, when in the beginning of the year 1709 died Père la Chaise, who had for five-and-thirty years filled the important post of confessor to the king. The revocation of the edict of Nantz, and subsequent persecution of the Protestants, disgrace the period of his spiritual direc-

* Jortin's Remarks on Ecclesiastical History.

tion; but he was not the chief mover of those measures; and it could hardly be expected that a member of the order of Jesuits should oppose them. In the affair of the Jansenists, and all other religious questions, he had shown himself singularly mild; indeed his faith in religion was of that easy kind denounced by Pascal, which tolerates every opinion, provided it does not brave the church, and winks at every sin, so long as it wears the cloak of decency, and does not deny the healing power of confession and absolution. "You are too indulgent," Lewis frequently said to him.—"No," answered the reverend father, "it is not I who am too indulgent, but you who are too harsh." It is reported, that when he was dying, he thus addressed the King, "Sire, I beg of you, as a favour, to choose my successor from our body. It is much attached to your Majesty; but it is very numerous, and composed of men of different characters, all zealous for the glory of the society. In a time of misfortune there is no answering for them, and a single blow is soon struck."*

The King, whether influenced or not by this singular speech, which had more the air of a menace than a request, desired to have three Jesuits deputed to him, out of whom he might choose his future confessor. When they were

* Duclos, *Mémoires Secrets*, t. i. p. 141.

shown into his presence, one of them kept behind his companions, with his eyes fixed on the ground, his hands clenched together, and his countenance neither abashed by the presence in which he stood, nor outwardly affected by the hopes which his situation might have inspired. But the more he seemed unmindful of others, the more deeply he fixed the attention of the King, who presently named him to the vacant post. A more sinister choice could not have been made. When the King heard that his name was Le Tellier, he asked him if he was a relation of Tellier de Louvois? "I, Sire!" he answered; "I am but the son of a poor peasant, and have neither relations nor friends." There are men, of whom it may be said, that it would be well for the world if they were vain or licentious. The exemption from ordinary weaknesses is in some characters an indication that the soul is occupied with darker vices. Prudence, temperance, and fortitude, are sometimes the handmaids of envy, cruelty, and hatred. Thus it was with Father le Tellier, the son of an attorney in Normandy. He was proud, presumptuous, and malignant in disposition, unsocial in his habits, unchanging in his objects, indefatigable in his pursuit of them. Full of the spirit of persecution, strengthened by a narrow but vigorous zeal for the order to which he belonged, he soon obtained

a mastery over the mind of a declining King, who, no longer capable of enjoyment in this world, was preparing his plea for the next, by gloomy piety and uncharitable orthodoxy. At the time when Le Tellier thus became possessed of the most important ministry in France, the only one of which Lewis was not jealous, and in which he did not think his own opinion better than that of his adviser, the name of Jesuit had suffered some diminution of its glory. With their usual policy, the Jesuit missionaries of China had complied, in many respects, with the superstitious practices of the natives, in order to obtain an ascendancy over their minds: this condescension had been represented in the most odious colours by their enemies, and the Court of Rome had lent a favourable ear to the accusation. A book of Le Tellier himself, on the Chinese Ceremonies, had been condemned by the Papal tribunal at the instigation of the Jansenists. Thus the new confessor was impelled at once by bigotry as a monk, zeal for the glory of his company as a Jesuit, and revenge for his sufferings as an author, to punish the heterodox, but still formidable sect.

One of the first acts of the reign of Le Tellier was the destruction of the monastery of Port Royal. This celebrated school of learning and piety had produced and nurtured the chief enemies of the

Port
Royal.

Jesuits. The three Arnauds, Nicole, Lemaitre de Saci, Pascal, the author of the admirable Provincial Letters, and many other men eminent in literature, as well as theology, had issued from this place, and edified the world, no less by the sanctity of their lives, than by the depth of their knowledge, and the vigour of their reasoning. The nuns of the society followed the doctrines of these able masters. After many disputes, an order was obtained from the King for the demolition of the convent: every precaution was taken to provide against resistance on the part of the nuns. In the dead of the night, a detachment of French and Swiss guards surrounded the habitation of the sleeping community. In the morning d'Argenson, chief of the police, arrived with a body of patrole and archers, ordered the door to be opened, displayed a *lettre de cachet* to the assembled convent, and gave them, after the manner of a victorious general, only a quarter of an hour's delay. The nuns were hurried into separate carriages, each carriage attended by a guard of archers, like a body of conspirators, and they were conveyed to different convents, some to twenty, some fifty, some to an hundred miles distance. The old women being thus secured without any loss to the besiegers, the convent was soon afterwards levelled to the ground, the bodies of the

dead were disinterred and removed, and the plough passed over the spot. Thus did the troops of his most Christian Majesty achieve the conquest of a convent, and crush the rebellion of a polemical sisterhood!*

Quesnel. Under the vigorous administration of Le Tellier, the church was soon agitated by a new subject. The Jesuits, finding that the practices of their missionaries in China excited much clamour against them, bethought themselves of diverting the storm in some other direction. They fixed upon a book called "*Reflections Morales sur le Nouveau Testament du Père Quesnel.*" This book had been published forty years, latterly with the approbation of the Cardinal de Noailles, and was so much esteemed by the Père La Chaise, that he always kept it on his table, saying, that as he had not time to read much, he was glad to have a book that was a mine of doctrine and exemplary piety. Even the Pope had said to a person who visited him, "Here is an excellent book: we have no body at Rome capable of writing like this. I should be glad to invite the author near me."† Uncontradicted reputation, and approved morality, however, formed no de-

* St. Simon, iii. p. 244.

† Voltaire, Siècle de L. XIV. Jansenisme.

fence against the arms of the Jesuits. At their earnest solicitation, the Pope issued what was called the Constitution, or Bull Unigenitus, the fruitful and never-failing source of schism, of passion, and of party, till the Revolution absorbed all other subjects of dispute. By this bull, issued in 1713, the Head of the Romish Church declared, that there were an hundred and one heretical propositions in the book of Père Quesnel. Among the propositions so condemned, was the following: "The fear of an unjust excommunication ought never to deter us from doing our duty." If this sentiment be not a just one, it is evident that all Catholic kings are at the mercy of the Pope; yet so inconsistent is human nature, that Lewis the Fourteenth, the king of all others the most jealous of his authority, used the whole influence of his crown to obtain a condemnation of it from a reluctant and unambitious Pope. A curious anecdote is told relative to this bull. Amelot, Minister of France at Rome, asked the Pope why he was not satisfied with a general censure of some propositions of Quesnel, without entering so far into particulars? "Ah! M. Amelot, M. Amelot," answered the Pope, "what could I do? Le Tellier had assured the King that there were in the book more than an hundred censurable

The Bull
Unigeni-
tus.

1713.

propositions, and he did not choose to pass for a liar; they held the knife to my throat to make me condemn more than a hundred.”* Quesnel, the unfortunate author of this work, whom the Pope had said he wished to invite to reside near him, was obliged to fly from France into the Low Countries; but even there he was not safe. The Jesuits obtained an order from the King of Spain to arrest him, and he was confined in the prison of Malines. By the assistance of a disciple, he afterwards escaped into Holland, and passed the remainder of his days at Amsterdam, in a zealous endeavour to establish Jansenist churches in that city.

The King had become, in the course of a long contest, very warm and eager on the side of the Jesuits. When James the Second meditated the appointment of Catholic bishops in England, Lewis wrote to him to take care not to appoint Jansenists, or he would admit a heresy as mischievous as that which he wished to supplant.† His theological zeal led him sometimes to a ridiculous excess. When the Duke of Orleans was about to take the command of the army in Spain, the King asked him, who he meant to take with him; and the Duke naming a person of the

* St. Simon, t. iv. p. 156.

† Appendix to Fox's Hist. of James II.

name of Fontpertuis, he objected that the mother of Fontpertuis was a Jansenist. "*Ma foi, Sire,*" answered the Duke of Orleans, "I do not know what the mother was, but as for the son, so far from being a Jansenist, I rather think he is an atheist." "Indeed!" said the King, "are you quite sure of that? In that case you may take him." *

The acceptance of the bull *Unigenitus* however, notwithstanding the King's blind zeal, met with great difficulties in France. Forty-eight bishops, who were at that time at Paris, assembled by order of the King; after debates which lasted for four entire months, forty of them agreed to accept the bull; eight, with Noailles, Archbishop of Paris, at their head, required explanations, and suspended their consent. In the Parllament, the bull met with still greater opposition. The ancient defenders of the liberties of the church of France could not easily consent to register a constitution of this kind as an act of supreme authority. The King, exhorted by his confessor to hold a bed of justice, attempted in lieu of it to accomplish his object, by sending for the chief persons of the judicial body. Of these, De Mesmes, the first president, was in

* St. Simon, t. iv. p. 153. *Mém. sur Louis XIV. Extraits de la Correspondance allemande de Madame Mère du Regent.*

favour of the bull, but d'Aguesseau, the *procureur général*, who bore a high character for learning of all kinds, for piety, candour, and integrity, was known to be unfavourable to this increase of the power of the Pope and the Jesuits, at the expense of the King and the Gallican church. The chief, and most conspicuous fault of the character of d'Aguesseau, was a degree of timidity which often obscured and nearly extinguished the lustre of all his noble inclinations. His wife, of the family of Ormesson, knowing this defect, and wishing to deprive him of the favourite apology of feeble and interested characters, who always put forth a regard for their family, as an excuse for disgracing themselves, exclaimed to him, "Go; in the presence of the King forget your wife and children; lose every thing but honour."* The advice of this noble-minded woman for this time prevailed, and d'Aguesseau spoke to the King with the force which a good cause and an eloquent advocate command. Lewis, unaccustomed to find opposition to his will from his subjects, and more especially from his Parliament, was greatly provoked at their resistance, and meditated depriving d'Aguesseau and Joly de Fleury, who seconded him, of their offices. Seeing, however, that this step would not advance their purpose, the Jesuits

* Duclos, t. i.

bethought themselves of other means of overcoming all opposition to the bull.

The Cardinal de Noailles, Archbishop of Paris, had long been a thorn in the side of those who wished to persecute without measure or mercy the unfortunate Jansenists. His nomination to the see of Paris, through the influence of Madame de Maintenon, had been one of the appointments most creditable to the monarch, and Lewis, conscious of his own merit in the act, had said at the time, "If I had known any one more worthy to fill the post than the bishop of Châlons, I would not have appointed him." Kind and charitable in his disposition, magnificent in his hospitality, attentive to the duties of his see, Noailles had obtained in his diocese of Châlons the suffrages alike of the clergy, the nobility and the poor. In his more important station at Paris, he had continued the same course, and had thus regained for the church the respect of the people, which his predecessor, Harlai de Chauvalon, had much diminished by his known attachment to Madame de Lesdiguières, and her equally notorious sale of benefices. So far was the Cardinal de Noailles from amassing treasure, that at his death only five hundred livres were found in his house above the sum necessary to pay his debts: the memory of his charity and kindness

The Cardinal de Noailles.

lived long in the hearts of the inhabitants of Paris.

Yet all these merits did not suffice, nor, even if they had been accompanied by the gifts of an apostle, would they have sufficed, to find pardon for the Cardinal in the eyes of the Jesuits. Even the bitterest of his foes, however, did not accuse him of partaking the opinions of the Jansenists.* All that could be laid to his charge, was that he opposed them faintly; that he seemed to pity them; that he sometimes saved them from oppression; in short, that he did not enter into the measures of persecution on which the vindictive hearts of their enemies were bent. The approbation of the book of Quesnel, and his suspending in his see the execution of the constitution *Unigenitus*, were the two chief facts upon which a stress was laid. In pursuit of his destruction, Le Tellier and his brethren omitted none of those arts and intrigues for which their order has been proverbial in every part of Europe. They excited the bishops in the provinces who belonged to their party, to issue charges in their dioceses against the Archbishop of Paris, which they stuck up on the walls of his palace, and when he attempted to retaliate, denounced him to the King as a persecutor of or-

* See Mad. de Maintenon's letters to him on this subject.
Lettres de Maintenon, t. ii.

thodox Catholics. On one occasion they had nearly been caught in their own net. The Abbe de Saron had been employed to write to his uncle the Bishop of Clermont, a man of eighty years old, transmitting a charge against Noailles, which he was desired to sign, and return to Le Tellier. The emissary employed, from scruples of conscience perhaps, perhaps from a hope of gain, carried the letters to the Cardinal, who had numerous copies taken of them, and sent them to the King and Madame de Maintenon. Le Tellier, however, made the Abbé de Saron take the whole blame upon himself, and deny the participation of the Jesuits; Lewis, grown old and inactive, was now in a state to believe any thing which he heard from his confessor, and, as too frequently happens, the storm fell not upon the guilty, but upon the discoverer of the crime. Noailles sunk into complete disgrace with the King, and was refused admission into his presence. In this extremity, Madame de Maintenon abandoned him; she had, indeed, frequently warned him of his danger, and told him that all the world complained of his lenity to the Jansenists; but when she saw him falling, she was much too prudent to risk her influence in order to save her friend. This the Cardinal was well aware of. In a letter to her, he says, "No misfortune shall alter my sentiments of venera-

tion for him who laid heavy his hand upon me, nor for her who might have parried the blow."*

Insatiate in their vengeance, Le Tellier and his party now resolved to obtain from the King an order to seize the Cardinal, to carry him to Pierre Encise, and from there to Rome, where he was to be degraded in full consistory; to procure at the same time the suspension of d'Aguesseau, and give his office by commission to Chauvelin, a mere tool, who was ready to preside over a bed of justice, where the bull should be registered.

Stratagem
of Madlle.
de Chaus-
seraye.

This bold scheme was defeated by the quickness and presence of mind of a woman of no rank or note. Mademoiselle de Chausseraye was the daughter of a gentleman of Poitou; having lost her parents, she had been recommended to Madame, and had been admitted into her household. The King, pleased with her manners and sincere devotion to his person, often gave her audiences alone. She made use of this advantage to prevent acts of harshness, and obtain favours for persons whom she thought deserving, even without any personal acquaintance with them. As an intimate friend of the Duchess of Ventadour, she was in the habit of hearing in her apartments, the conversation of the Jesuit party, and being thought a good-natured harmless person, was allowed to

* Letter to Madame de Maintenon. Mai, 1714.

know all their secret wishes and designs. By this means she became acquainted with the project of carrying off the Cardinal, which was to receive the final approbation of the King on the next day. Determined to lose no time, she directly sought and obtained a private audience of the King. "Sire," she said, "you do not look so well as you did yesterday; you seem melancholy; I am afraid they vex you." "You are right," answered the King, "there is something that annoys me; they want me to take a step that is repugnant to me, and it vexes me." "I respect your secrets, Sire, but I will lay a wager it is for this bull, of which I do not understand one word. For my part, I am a good christian, and do not trouble myself with their disputes; but it is too good of you to allow yourself to be harassed; let them arrange it as they can; they think neither of your health nor your repose, and that is what interests me, and the whole kingdom." "You do very right," said Lewis, "and I have a great mind to do the same." "Do then, Sire; leave all these priests' quarrels alone, regain your health, and all will be well."

The next day, at four in the morning, Mademoiselle de Chausseraye set out alone, had an interview with the Archbishop, advised him on no

account to go out of Paris, and returned to Versailles without any one having been aware of her departure. When she saw her friends, she was rejoiced to find that their altered looks, and gloomy manner, attested the bad state of their affairs, and, upon her enquiring if the Archbishop was to be arrested that day, they told her with every mark of consternation, that as soon as Le Tellier began to speak about it, the King cut him short, and told him to be silent, with such evident displeasure, that they could not venture to return to the subject.*

It is impossible not to admire the dexterity with which Mademoiselle de Chausseraye conducted this affair, and above all, her thorough knowledge of the King. Had she pretended to interfere in the particular question; had she represented that the Cardinal de Noailles was a virtuous and dignified prelate, whom no one accused of more than a desire to protect the weaker party from the insatiate vengeance of their enemies; had she ventured to suggest that the Jansenists were among the most moral of all christians, that they paid obedience to the Pope, and differed only on one or two metaphysical questions, of no practical importance; had she hinted that persecution often propagates the

* Duclos, t. i.

opinion it is meant to suppress; on all or any of these topics, Lewis would never have listened to her. But when she spoke to him as one who thought only of his welfare, and expressed her fears that the violent and unjust act he was about to commit towards another, might have a bad effect upon his own health, she was heard, attended to, and successful.

There is one other reflection that arises upon this matter. Had Madame de Maintenon, with the powerful influence she had acquired over the King, and such constant opportunities of using it, possessed half the charity, and half the courage of the obscure Mademoiselle de Chausseraye, how many persons she might have saved from destruction; how much might she have softened the last years of the administration of Lewis!

Certain it is, however, that Madame de Maintenon did not so exert her power, and her timidity cost dear to France. Although the Cardinal de Noailles escaped the punishment intended for him, the prisons were filled with persons suspected of the crime of Jansenism. When a division took place in the Sorbonne, those who voted against receiving the bull, were sent to gaol; in every part of France priests, nuns, nobles, and often whole families, were confined in dungeons, and exposed to every kind of suffering with which confinement

can be attended, because they would not allow that there were a hundred and one heretical propositions in the book of Quesnel. But in spite of these severities, the heretical opinions spread, and the virtues of the persons punished contributed to increase the odium, which every day more and more attached to the government of Lewis.

The foregoing details may seem to many, trifling and tiresome; but they are necessary, in order to understand, as well the feelings of the people towards Lewis at the close of his reign, as the subsequent history of France.

The other subject upon which the mind and conscience of the King were tormented by those around him, was the question of the Regency to be established by his will. In order to understand this subject, it is necessary to recur to some events which took place before the period we are now treating of. The Dauphin, the eldest son of Lewis the Fourteenth, died in 1711. His son, the Duke of Burgundy, who succeeded him, had borne the title of Dauphin only for a year, but long enough to obtain the affectionate attachment of France, when, in the space of a single month, he, his wife, and his eldest son, were carried to a premature grave. The manner of their death was not singular: the Dauphiness was attacked by a violent fever, which affected her head, and the

Will of
Lewis
XIV.

Death of
the Dau-
phin and
Dauphi-
ness.

Dauphin, after several nights attendance upon her, caught her complaint. But in those times, when men were still familiar with the crime of poisoning, and very imperfectly acquainted with the effects of disease upon the human frame, it was not to be expected that the sudden deaths of persons so eminent in rank should be attributed to natural causes. A consultation was held upon the bodies of the Dauphin and Dauphiness. Fagon, first physician to the King, a flatterer of Madame de Maintenon, and Boudin, physician to the Dauphiness, a vain and ignorant coxcomb, both maintained that the bodies bore marks of poison, and alleged as a proof of it, that the heart of the Dauphin was putrid, almost to dissolution. Maréchal, first surgeon to the King, on the other hand, though alone, and secretly not quite confident in his opinion, positively maintained that the bodies bore no marks of poison, and that he had several times seen the same effects produced by putrid fevers of great malignity. The suspicion of poison was rendered still more dreadful by the family relation which subsisted between the King and the person suspected of the crime. Madame de Maintenon, in the presence of Maréchal and the physicians, went so far as to say, that it was well known where the blow came from, and immediately named the Duke of Orleans, the nephew of the

The Duke of Orleans accused of poisoning them.

King. The King assented, and seemed to have no doubt of the truth of what she said. Fagon confirmed their opinions by nods of the head, and Boudin added that he had no doubt of the prince's guilt.* Let us pause for a moment to remark on the life and manners of him who was thus boldly accused of one of the most atrocious crimes it is possible for man to commit.

Previous life of the Duke of Orleans.

Philip, Duke of Orleans, the son of Monsieur, the King's brother, and a German princess, had been married when young to one of the natural daughters of the King by Madame de Montespan. At once ashamed of his marriage, and indignant at the means which had been employed to procure his consent, he fell into a course of licentious conduct, and passed his time with the most abandoned women, and the most profligate men of the age. This behaviour, at any time reprehensible, was more peculiarly remarked at a period when the Court laid so great a stress upon strictness of morals, and punctuality of devotion; yet, singular to say, the Duke of Orleans, by the good qualities of his heart, the frankness of his manners, and the benevolence of his nature, preserved the affections of many men of the best and most estimable character. Among them, the celebrated Fenelon and

* St. Simon, vol. vi. p. 94. St. Simon heard all this from Maréchal.

the Duke of St. Simon were conspicuous; but, above all, it was remarkable that no one had shown more friendly anxiety for his welfare, than the late Duke of Burgundy. When serving in Spain, the Duke of Orleans had imprudently entered into an intrigue for placing the Spanish crown upon his own head, in case Philip the Fifth should renounce it. The plot was discovered, and the Dauphin proposed in the council of state that he should be tried for high treason. At this time the Duke of Burgundy interposed, spoke with warmth in favour of his cousin, and saved him from disgrace, if not from death. What probability was there that he should now have turned against his benefactor, and, with singular infatuation, have murdered his friends, while he left his bitter enemies in the full possession of life and power? But even admitting him to be capable of such wickedness, how unlikely that he should be able to poison three persons at the same time without detection; and that he should succeed in giving to two of them the appearance of a natural fever! But the story is too full of absurdity to merit refutation. The people, however, quick in their suspicions, and hasty, though generous in their sentiments, were easily induced to look upon the Duke of Orleans as the poisoner of their beloved Dauphin. For, strange as it may appear, mankind have a natural tendency

to believe any thing that is incredible ; and many persons of moderate capacity form their opinion against an accused person, not from the strength of the evidence, but from the atrocity of the crime imputed to him. Some unfortunate circumstances contributed to favour the credulity of the vulgar. Fond of literature and of science, the Duke of Orleans had constructed a laboratory in his palace, and employed a chemist of celebrity, of the name of Homberg, to assist him in performing experiments. This well known fact, together with a foolish avowal that he had attempted to see the devil, and some nonsensical endeavours to guess at futurity, by means of glasses of water, led the ignorant of all classes to a full persuasion of his guilt. The feelings of the multitude were speedily shown in a manner not to be mistaken. When the Duke of Orleans went to throw holy water, upon two separate occasions, on the remains of the late Dauphin and Dauphiness, according to the forms of the Court, persons in the streets pointed at him scornfully, and loaded him with the most revolting and injurious epithets. The day of the funeral was attended with still more insult ; and when the procession passed the Palais Royal, the tumult was so violent, that for some minutes it seemed likely to end in an attack on the life of the prince.

In this painful situation, the Duke of Orleans, by the advice of the Marquis d'Effiat, went to the King, and asked permission to give himself up as prisoner at the Bastile, praying at the same time that his Majesty would be pleased to give orders that Homberg, and such other persons of his household as the King might think proper, should be arrested. Lewis received him with an air of cold disdain, and immediately refused his request. Upon the pressing instances of the prince, however, he agreed that Homberg should be received at the Bastile, if he chose to go there; but this consent was soon afterwards retracted: Homberg, upon presenting himself at the Bastile, was refused admittance; and when the Duke of Orleans again insisted, the King turned his back upon him, and refused to answer.* It is said, that the refusal of the King was owing to the advice of Maréchal, who represented that the justification of the Duke of Orleans would still leave a stain upon his character in the eyes of the world, always credulous of accusation, and sceptical of innocence. Besides, in his cooler moments, Lewis himself probably did not believe in the guilt of his nephew. Maréchal having once said to him, that if the Duke of Orleans were a private person, he would have ten ways of gaining an honest liveli-

His conduct.

* St. Simon, Duclos, Voltaire.

hood, and that he was besides, the best natured man in the world, Lewis replied, “ Do you know what my nephew is? A braggart of crimes he does not commit.”*

The conduct of the Duke of Orleans upon this occasion, has been very generally blamed, both by his friend, the Duke of St. Simon, by Voltaire, and by subsequent historians. Yet, what is more natural, or more honourable, than for a man unjustly aspersed, and loaded with the most cruel calumnies, to seek for a fair and open hearing, where he may meet his accusers and dispel the accusation? It has been said, that it was beneath the dignity of a son of France to put himself in the place of a prisoner for trial; but surely it is not beneath the dignity of any man, who feels himself innocent, to endeavour, by the most undeniable evidence, and in the most public manner, to shake off the imputation of guilt. It has been said likewise by St. Simon, and those who blame the Duke of Orleans, that he might have confounded his enemies, by throwing the charge of poison either on the heads of the Duke of Maine, or of the Court of Austria. But, in all probability, the Duke of Orleans did not believe the fact that the late Dauphin had been poisoned, and, in that case,

* “ *Savez-vous ce que c'est que mon neveu? C'est un faron de crimes qu'il ne commet pas.*” Duclos, t. i. St. Simon.

such a defence would have made him guilty of the same crime towards others, which the bitterest and least scrupulous of his enemies had committed against him.

A fair trial being refused, however, by the King, the reports of this horrible deed, incapable of being met and refuted, made their way from Paris to the provinces, and over the whole of Europe. In the palace of Lewis, the base train of the Court, gave a singular testimony of their belief in these dreadful rumours. The King, bound by etiquette, more sacred in palaces than feeling, continued to ask the Duke of Orleans to Marly, and on all his other excursions; but wherever he appeared, and which ever way he moved, the courtiers hastily turned from him, and left him standing in an empty circle. Even the Duchess of Orleans, his wife, was abandoned by all the ladies of the Court.*

In this singular and sudden reverse of the fortunes of the House of Orleans, Madame de Maintenon saw a propitious opening for the advancement of a person to whom she was tenderly attached, and for the maintenance of her own greatness. It was evident, that if she allowed the Duke of Orleans to succeed quietly to the Regency, her power and credit were for ever at an end.

Project of
Madame
de Maintenon.

* St. Simon, t. vi.

She could never hope to have any influence during the supremacy of a prince who had become her personal enemy, and to whose mother she was an object of undisguised detestation. It has been said, that in order to avoid this evil, the Jesuit, Le Tellier, had once a project of declaring the marriage of Madame de Maintenon, and investing her with the Regency, but I am not inclined to believe even in the proposal of a scheme so evidently impracticable. There was another method of excluding the Duke of Orleans, at once more agreeable to the wishes of the favourite, and more easy of execution.

The Duke
of Maine.

The Duke of Maine and the Count of Toulouse were the sons of Lewis and Madame de Montespan. In order to please the King, Harlay, President of the Parliament, discovered a method of conferring the rights of legitimacy upon children, without mentioning the mother. This process, which was first tried in the case of the Chevalier de Longueville, the son of the Duke of Longueville, who was killed at the passage of the Rhine, and of the Maréchale de la Ferté, was employed in favour of the Duke of Maine in 1673, and of the other children of Madame de Montespan in the following year. In 1694, the Duke of Maine and the Count of Toulouse had an inter-

mediate rank given to them between the princes of the blood and the *Ducs et Pairs*; they were not to have the privilege of walking across the floor of the Parliament, like princes of the blood, and were to be addressed by the president by the names of their peerage, which princes of the blood were not, but the president was to take off his cap to them, which he did not do to the peers.* In 1710 the same privilege was extended to their children, and St. Simon has carefully recorded, with many additional details, that it was on a Saturday, the 15th of March, that this dreadful innovation was announced. In fact, the distinctions granted to the illegitimate sons excited in the breasts of the princes of the blood, and still more in those of the *Ducs et Pairs*, feelings of the deepest and most lasting

* The privilege of walking across the floor, or parquet of the Parliament, took its rise in a trifling circumstance. The parquet was a small square enclosed before the president, where no one ever put his foot. An old prince of Condé having an attack of the gout, one day walked across it to his seat to save himself trouble. Some time after, the Duke of Enghien, known as the great Condé, followed his father, who advised him to desist. "Let me see who will dare to stop me," said the Duke of Enghien. From this time the right of walking across the parquet was a privilege of the princes of the blood. Such are the objects for which men contend!

indignation. Valincourt, a member of the Academy, perceiving the murmur occasioned by these edicts, said to the Count of Toulouse, "Monseigneur, you have got a crown of roses, which when the flowers fall off, I fear will become a crown of thorns."*

The Duke of Maine, for whom these things were done, and still further extraordinary favours projected, seems to have been exactly of such a character as we should expect to find in a son of Madame de Montespan, educated by Madame de Maintenon. He was remarkable for the talent of conversation, excelled in relating anecdote, abounded in witty and refined observation, and was, when he chose it, an excellent mimic. With these powers, his society was extremely pleasing to the King, who saw in him a person unbiassed by the intrigues of party, and equally removed from those scandalous excesses which, in the Duke of Orleans, excited his displeasure, and from that inclination for business, which in the Duke of Burgundy had sometimes roused his jealousy. Thus trusted, and admitted more than any one, except Madame de Maintenon, into the interior, he was able to give advice in the shape of flattery; to insinuate his own opinions, while he appeared to be applauding

* Duclos, t. i.

those of the King ; and to strike deadly blows at his enemies, when he seemed to be merely drawing ludicrous pictures for the amusement of his sovereign and parent. He was, at the same time, apparently absorbed by his devotions and his domestic duties, and devoid of ambition, envy, or hatred ; his friends called this—apathy, his enemies, hypocrisy. With much ability and much cunning, he nevertheless seems to have been destitute, both in the cabinet and in the field, of the power of persevering exertion, and of that quality which is so appropriately termed presence of mind. When he should have been employed in suiting his means to the great end at which he aimed he was busy in translating into French verse the *Anti-Lucretius* of the Abbé de Polignac. When entrusted by his father with the command in Flanders, his conduct made him a subject of mortification to his own army, and a laughing-stock to the enemy. Upon his return, a person of the court gave him a reproof, which at once shows how notorious his misbehaviour had become, and how great was the liberty of speech used at the court of Lewis. The Duke d'Elbœuf begged that he might always accompany the Duke of Maine in his campaigns : “ why so ? ” asked the Duke ; “ because,” replied the other, “ I am sure that where your royal high-

ness goes, there will be no danger of losing one's life."

The
Duchess of
Maine.

The Duchess of Maine was a person of a different stamp. A grand-daughter of the great Condé, she had all the aspiring ambition and restless spirit of intrigue, which distinguished that remarkable man. She felt with the rooted pride of family, the mortification of being married to an illegitimate son, and on expressing her thanks to Madame de Maintenon for the honours conferred on her husband, the terms she used were, "I can now show my children without shame." With these passions, and great quickness of understanding, it is no wonder if the Duchess of Maine felt warmly, when fortune seemed to open to her a prospect of boundless extent. Her dressing-room became a cabinet council; her ladies of the bed-chamber negociators and politicians.

May,
1714.

Such were the persons whom Madame de Maintenon endeavoured to place at the head of the government to be formed after the demise and by the will of Lewis. Some circumstances contributed to aid her project. In May, 1714, the Duke of Berri, the only grandson of Lewis remaining in France, died after a short illness. It is said, that when the body was opened, his stomach was found to be ulcerated, and suspicions of poison immediately fell upon his wife, a daughter of the Duke of Orleans,

whose conduct had been so licentious and abandoned, that her husband at the very time of his death, was about to request an order for her confinement in the Bastile, from the King. This event awakened in all their former violence, the reports which had prevailed two years before respecting the Duke of Orleans. Another circumstance which emboldened the friends of the Duke of Maine, was the publication of a history of France, by Father Daniel, a Jesuit, in which great pains were taken to show that the kings of the first and second race had often called their illegitimate sons to the succession of the throne. The ladies of the court, with ridiculous learning, said: "Clovis was not so great a man as Lewis the Fourteenth, and yet in a similar case he did more." *

It must be confessed that Lewis was in a painful and embarrassing situation. On the one side, he saw the woman whom he most loved, and a son for whom he had a tender affection, entreating him, as it were, not to confide the person of his infant heir, and the government of his people, to a prince personally offensive to him by the laxity of his morals, and regarded by the whole of his court, as one whom no scruples, even at the most horrible crimes, could stop in his way to power. On the

* The Princess d'Harcourt to Madame de Maintenon.

other side, the long practice of the monarchy, and the experience of his own and his father's minority, taught him how little the will of a king could prevail over proximity of blood, and the inclinations of the Parliament. His religious strictness likewise, must have been somewhat shocked at preferring the fruit of an adulterous amour to a prince of the blood; and his high notions of the privileges belonging to the legitimate branch of the royal family, must have been startled at the contemplation of a project, which disturbed the regularity of succession, and excluded from power the nearest relation to the throne.

Edict of 1714. With his mind full of these and other difficulties, Lewis long hesitated. At length in 1714, he signed an edict, granting to the Duke of Maine and the Count of Toulouse, the power of succeeding to the crown after the princes of the blood. In the following year he made them rank in all respects as princes of the blood. But the King was himself aware that this stretch of royal power, while it opened to his favourite son more extensive prospects, likewise exposed him to greater dangers. "You have chosen it," he said to him one day; "I have done for you what I could; it is for you to confirm it by your merit."* The edict was re-

* Duclos, t. i.

gistered by the Parliament without opposition ; but when the King endeavoured to explain his reasons for what he had done to a deputation, to whom he delivered the edict, the first president answered him : “ Sire, a disposition of this nature touches a matter so high, and is of so great consequence, that we cannot doubt your majesty has made all the reflections upon it, which your profound wisdom can inspire.” Lewis was obliged to conceal the displeasure which this equivocal compliment gave him.*

All was not yet accomplished : the last scene of The Will. this curious drama was the signature and delivery of the King’s will. Madame de Maintenon appears to have prompted, and Voisin, her creature, Chancellor of the kingdom, to have drawn up this important document. By this instrument, a council of regency was named, of which the Duke of Orleans was to be president, but where every thing was to be decided by a plurality of voices. The council was to be composed of the Duke of Bourbon, when he should have attained the age of twenty-four, of the Duke of Maine, of the Count of Toulouse, of the Chancellor, the chief of the royal council, the Marshals Villeroy, Villars, Tallard, and Harcourt, the four secretaries of state, and the Comptroller General. All resolutions ap-

* St. Simon.

pertaining to the royal functions were to be taken; all appointments whatever to be made by this council. The president was only to have a casting voice in the case of the number of suffrages being equal. The Duke of Maine was entrusted with the care of the education, personal safety, and preservation of the young king, with the full command of the household, both civil and military. In case of death, he was to be succeeded by the Count of Toulouse. Marshal Villeroy was named governor of the young king, under the Duke of Maine.*

These unwise and futile provisions perfectly reflect the embarrassed and wavering mind of the King. Unable to convince himself that the Duke of Orleans had been actually guilty of the crimes imputed to him, he could not resolve to remove him altogether from the place to which he was entitled, and vainly imagined that by placing him at the head of the council of regency, he preserved to him the rank due to his royal birth. On the other hand, unable to clear entirely from his thoughts the suspicions which those about him were continually pouring into his ear, he attempted to deprive his nephew of all power, and to surround him with such a number of his most favou-

* See a copy of the will. Œuvres de Louis XIV. t. ii.

rite servants as might be more than sufficient to neutralize his influence in the council. But this was one of those occasions in which a half measure was peculiarly inexpedient. The Duke of Orleans could be deprived of the regency by no other way than the most determined and unscrupulous hostility ; by giving currency and confirmation to the suspicions of his opponents : by excluding him from all participation in the government, as a man who could not be trusted without hazard, and by arming his adversaries with strength and means sufficient to carry that exclusion into effect. To leave him with any part of the regency, was to open his way to the whole, but with this additional inconvenience, that the kingdom was exposed to the risk of civil war, during the contention of two balanced and exasperated competitors for power. With the Duke of Orleans, as with a wild beast, there were only two courses to pursue ; to leave him alone, or to destroy him ; to wound him and leave him loose, was to incur needless peril, and make choice of an assured evil.

Lewis himself seems to have had little expectation, and perhaps little wish that his will should be executed. In delivering the sealed packet to the first president and attorney general of the Parliament, he said to them ; “ Gentlemen, this is my will ; no one but myself knows what it contains ;

Language
of Lewis.

the examples of the kings, my predecessors, and that of the will of the king, my father, do not allow me to be ignorant of what may be the fate of this; but others have chosen it. Happen what may, at least, I shall hear no more about it." At these last words, he shook his head, and went into another room. The next day, seeing the Queen of England, he repeated nearly the same words to her, adding, "I know the uselessness of what I have done; we can do all that we choose during our life-time, afterwards, less than private persons."* By these expressions, Lewis seemed clearly to foresee that his will would be set aside, and it must be added, that by these public declarations of his opinion, he contributed to the event which he prophesied. Perhaps he was not in his heart unwilling that the legitimate rights of birth should prevail even over his own express command and disposition.

Codicils of
the Will.

Two codicils were added to the will. By one of

* St. Simon, t. vi. pp. 149, 150. The editor of the works of Lewis the XIVth. doubts the fact of the King having spoken these words; but the authority of St. Simon is supported by those of Madame, and the Duke of Berwick. This last was told by the Queen of England, that Lewis said, "They insisted absolutely I should do it, but when I am dead, it will be just the same as if I had not done it." Mem. de Berwick, t. ii. Neither is the story improbable in itself.

these, the King ordered Marshal Villeroy to take the command of the troops, and the charge of the King's person, till his will should be opened; by a second, he appointed Fleury, bishop of Frejus, preceptor to the young king. Fleury had made himself agreeable to the ladies of the court, and was recommended to Madame de Maintenon by two of her friends. In her eyes, and in those of the greater part of the court, it was his strongest recommendation, that he was not devoted to the Jesuits. At the same time, in order to disarm the opposition of this powerful body, he had issued a charge condemning the doctrine of the Jansenists in the strongest terms, which was answered with much sharpness, and some ridicule by Quesnel himself. It has been conjectured with plausibility, that this answer converted a pretended foe into a real one, and that the animosity with which Fleury as a minister afterwards pursued the Jansenists, is greatly to be attributed to his wounded vanity as an author.*

The health of the King was now evidently breaking. The rapidity of his decline is said to have been owing to the violence of the remedies which were employed by his physicians: his remaining strength, instead of being supported by gentle cor-

Decline of
Lewis.

* St. Simon, t. vi. p. 210.

dials, was exhausted by the frequent and copious use of purgatives and sudorifics. Some have gone so far as to ascribe this treatment to the treachery of Fagon, his physician; but the supposition is absurd, and the low state of medicine, which at that time, probably, killed as many as it cured, is sufficient to account for the fact.

His death.

When in nearly the last stage of weakness, however, Lewis was able to receive an ambassador of Persia, with his usual pomp and magnificence; but it has been conjectured that the importance both of the envoy and of the mission was greatly exaggerated by the courtiers, in order to revive those feelings of pride and ambition in which this ostentatious prince had so long found his chief delight. This was in August 1715. In the same month, after his return from Marly, it was discovered that he had a mortification in his leg, which left him not long to live. When informed that his disease was without a remedy, he showed not the smallest uneasiness, and calmly said, that in that case he had better be left to die in peace. He asked Maréchal, his surgeon, upon whose sincerity he relied, how long he thought he might live: Maréchal replied, "till Wednesday:" "My sentence then is for Wednesday," said the King, without the least mark of trouble, disappointment, or alarm. From this time, and indeed, in the

whole course of his last illness, he displayed a patience, courage, and tranquillity, to which, even those the least inclined to praise him, have borne testimony in terms of the warmest admiration. When the members of his family collected around him were melted into tears at the sight of the painful sufferings he endured, he exclaimed, "This is too affecting; let us separate." To Madame de Maintenon he calmly observed, "I thought it was more difficult to die:" and seeing in the looking-glass that his attendants were crying, he said to them, "Why do you weep? did you believe me immortal?" Addressing himself to the Cardinals Rohan and Bissy, in a solemn voice he declared, "I die in the faith, and in submission to the church; I have little knowledge of the subjects which disturb it; I have done entirely what you wished; if I have done wrong, you will answer for it before God, whom I here call to witness." Some of the medical attendants asking one another if he might not see the Cardinal de Noailles, he expressed a desire to that effect; but Le Tellier had sufficient art to insert conditions with which Noailles could not comply. The King then sent for the Dauphin, and holding him in his arms, addressed to him the following words: "You are going soon to be king of a great kingdom; what I recommend to you most strongly is, never to forget

your obligations to God ; recollect that you owe to him all that you are. Endeavour to preserve peace with your neighbours. I have been too fond of war ; do not imitate me in that, any more than the excessive expenses I have gone into. Take counsel in every thing, and endeavour to know what is best, that you may always follow it. Relieve your people as soon as possible, and do what I have had the misfortune not to be able to do myself." These words were afterwards, by command of Marshal Villeroy, written at the foot of the bed of Lewis the Fifteenth, and remained there during his life. He likewise addressed some words to his officers of state, and those of the nobility who attended his bed-side ; he told them he was sorry not to have rewarded them better than he had done, but that the adversity of his latter years had not permitted it. " Serve the Dauphin," he continued, " with the same affection you have had for me ; he is a child of five years old, who may meet with many crosses, as I remember to have done, when I was young. Be all united, for union is the force of a state. Follow the orders that my nephew, the Duke of Orleans, will give you ; he is going to govern the kingdom ; I believe that he will do it well. I hope also that you will all do your duty, and that you will sometimes remember me." To the Duke of Orleans, he is reported to

have said ; “ You will see by my last dispositions, the entire confidence that I have in you ; you are Regent of the Kingdom ; your birth gives you this right, and my inclination is in concert with the justice that is due to you. Govern the State well during the minority of this prince ; if he dies, you are the sovereign ; if he lives, try above all to make him a Christian King ; let him love his people, and make himself beloved by them.” What is still more remarkable, he said to him, speaking of the Dauphin, “ I recommend him to you, and die in tranquillity, leaving him in your hands.” These expressions of the dying King, seem to prove almost to demonstration, that he did not then in the bottom of his heart, believe the horrible accusations that had been made against his nephew. He added some words at the desire of Madame de Maintenon, to recommend her to the protection of the Duke of Orleans. “ She has never given me any but good counsels ;” he said, “ I should have done well to have followed them. She has been useful to me in every thing, but above all, for my salvation. Do every thing that she asks of you for herself, for her relations, her friends, and connexions ; she will not abuse this power. Let her address herself directly to you for all she wants.”*

* These speeches of Lewis the XIVth are taken from the *Cœuvres de Louis XIV.* Edition of 1806. t. ii. p. 491.

In the same spirit of tranquillity which he showed throughout, Lewis gave directions that his heart should be placed in the church of the Jesuits, opposite to that of his father, and that Vincennes should be got ready for the reception of the Dauphin, whom he called the young king. Once or twice, speaking of himself, he said "when I was king."

The last days of Lewis were, undoubtedly, passed in a manner to do him honour; but the persons around him, not having the same immediate fear of death before their eyes, continued to display the appropriate vices of their nature. The Jesuits were bitter and persecuting; the courtiers base and interested; Madame de Maintenon timid and selfish as usual. The confessor, Le Tellier, nearly to the last continued to vex the King with perpetual solicitations concerning the registration of the bull: the attendants twice refused him admittance into the bed-chamber of the monarch.* The Duke of Orleans, who had been avoided and insulted at Marly, now saw his levee crowded with courtiers, vying with each other to boast their early defection from their dying master. A quack appeared at Versailles with an elixir, with which he promised to cure the King, and Lewis at the request of his nephew was induced to take it. He

* Voltaire. Siècle de L. XIV.

seemed a little revived and was able to eat: the courtiers immediately flew back to pay their homage. "If the King eats a second time," said the Duke of Orleans, "we shall have nobody." Madame de Maintenon herself, alarmed perhaps at the danger of popular tumults, retired to St. Cyr, on the Wednesday that Maréchal had fixed for the King's death, leaving him in a kind of stupor. When he awoke, he found that she was gone, and was obliged to send for her back. This was the last mortification which Lewis had to experience; he died on the 1st of September, 1715.

Sept. 1,
1815.

The news of the demise of the sovereign was received with universal joy by the people. On the day of his funeral, tents were set up on the roads to St. Denis, where crowds passed the day, shouting whenever the procession appeared, and drinking, laughing, and singing, on the happy occasion of the death of their sovereign.* Yet they were the same people, who, in 1686, had shed tears of alarm and anxiety during the king's illness, and who, in 1699, had burst forth in tumultuous joy at a report of the death of William the Third. The misfortunes of the war, the misery of the people, and the gloomy tyranny which the Jesuits had exercised during the last years of Lewis, were the chief causes of this revolution of popular feel-

Joy of the
People.

* Siècle de Louis XIV., Duclos. Vie de Phil. d'Orleans.

ing. It is reported, that when he was very young, his mother had said to him, "My son, resemble your grandfather, and not your father;" and the King asking the reason, "because" she answered, "the people cried at the death of Henry the Fourth, and laughed at that of Lewis the Thirteenth."

Character
of Lewis.

There is no man of whom more has been told and written, than Lewis the Fourteenth. Every part of his life has been described and related by persons who had excellent opportunities of knowing the truth. Madame de Motteville, a lady attached to the service of his mother, and La Porte, his first *valet de chambre*, have left memoirs relating to his infancy and youth. The history of his reign, which he entrusted to the courtly pens of his pensioned men of letters, has been given with more exactness by admirers who had nothing to gain by his favour, and censurers who had nothing to fear from his displeasure. The minutiae of his daily life have been recorded in the servile journal of Dangeau, and the faults of his character strongly painted by the powerful satire of St. Simon. The exterior of his court has been admirably sketched by the delicate pen of Madame de Sévigné, and the secrets of the interior have been partly revealed to us by the familiar and private communications of Madame de Maintenon. Let us add to all this, the innumerable memoirs written

by persons anxious to hand down the current gossip of the day, in a country where nothing remains long concealed; where the secrets of the State are carried in a few days by the minister to his mistress; by the mistress to her favoured lover; and by the lover to his friends, who are perhaps the bitter enemies of the minister. On such a theatre, Lewis was a perpetual actor; always in public; always watched; the object of a thousand curious eyes, and the subject of a thousand malicious tongues. A word scarcely passed from his lips, before it was whispered in every circle of the Court, and few hours elapsed before it was recorded in twenty manuscript books, with the comment of the writer, for the instruction of the latest posterity.

With such materials in our hands, what has been the fate of the memory of this famous monarch? It may perhaps be illustrated by a circumstance mentioned by Chardin, in his amusing travels in the East. A tomb near a city was said to contain the body of a celebrated saint: a mausoleum was built to his honour, and the people resorted to it with veneration. Suddenly a report was spread that the body found there, was that of a well-known heretic; the mausoleum was destroyed and ashes spread upon the spot. At length it was discovered that the tomb was neither that of the saint or of the heretic, but of some indifferent person.

The place was then neglected, and men ceased either to crowd to it with reverence, or to pass it by with malediction.

Such is, in some respects, the fate of the character of Lewis the Fourteenth. Admired at first by his country; the favourite theme of the greatest wits of his age; and, what is still more wonderful, of the greatest writer of his nation during the succeeding century, he was long considered in France as a model of a great king: and if not endowed with extraordinary genius, or blessed with uniform success, yet, as having acquired altogether as much of military and civil glory, as any sovereign who had ever been the hereditary possessor of a throne. But when, in the days of philosophy, men began to discover that the benefits of his government were illusory, the conquests of his arms pernicious, and the praises of his academicians blind or venal, they turned upon Lewis himself the whole torrent of public opinion, and exposed him to the scorn of the world, as an unfeeling and selfish tyrant. Neither of these opinions deserves the stamp of history. Lewis had not, in his nature, any very odious qualities; his faults were rather the effect of his station, than of his original character. He was generous, munificent, fond of letters, and the arts; a good son, an indulgent master, happy in his temper, anxious to do justice in his decisions.

Impressed from his youth upwards with a sincere piety, it was his earnest wish to gain the approbation both of God and man; and if, in his blind zeal, he thought the favour of the Deity was to be acquired by persecution, and the glory of a great name to be gained by laying waste the territory of his neighbours, we must not blame the error of an ordinary mind, so much as the perversion of a court, which called bigotry religion, and made unjust conquest the basis of reputation.

Yet, when these abatements are made on the one side, we shall find that it is impossible either greatly to admire, or greatly to love, the character of Lewis. If we look to his understanding, we shall see that he was remarkable chiefly for his great attention to business, and his love of affixing his own name to the designs of others. His capacity was by no means extraordinary. He had the mischievous passion of a conqueror, without any of the heroism which excites our sympathy, or the military genius that subdues our reason, in favour of the destroyers of mankind. He sent forth his thousands to perish on the Rhine or the Danube, that he might rest his head at Versailles upon the soft cushion of vanity, and receive the extravagant compliments of his servile subjects. From a habit of self-indulgence, and a ready belief in flattery, he came to direct all

his passions to one object, and that object the gratification and aggrandizement of himself. If he had mistresses whom he seemed to love, he behaved to them in a manner which showed that he considered their happiness, and even their lives, as of little value, in comparison with the indulgence of his comfort or caprice. If he had friends, whom he appeared to esteem, he left their services for years unrewarded, that he might enjoy their dependance; and punished their faults without mercy on a calculation of political advantages. As for his country, he considered it as centered in his own person; and, with a character the very opposite of that of Henry the Fourth, mistook the magnificence of his own Court for the happiness of his people.

His ruling
ambition.

One who played so great a part in the world, however, deserves to be examined more in detail. The great and leading ambition of Lewis, was to govern by himself. Nothing was so much the object of his alarm, as the notion of the influence of a prime minister, who should deprive him at once of power and glory. He was moved to this fear more especially by the example of his father, and by that of his mother during the Regency. Lewis the Thirteenth had been thoroughly subdued by Richelieu; and Anne of Austria, in like manner, was so entirely subjugated by Mazarin, that she could not obtain from him the smallest office.

for any of her friends.* The son spared no precaution to escape falling under the same yoke. As the ministers of Lewis the Thirteenth, and Anne, had been Cardinals, he made a rule to admit no Cardinal into his council. He took care to avoid the common rock of princes, the habit of reposing upon others the burthen of affairs, and in this conduct he seems to have been guided by the dying advice of Mazarin. With these and other precautions, he thought himself to the last so independent of any governing minister, that he wrote in 1704, to M. de Chateauneuf, "Explain to her (the Queen of Spain) that I decide every thing myself, and that no one would dare to impose upon me, statements contrary to the truth."†

But for a King to govern by himself, something more is requisite than an attention to business, and a determination not to confer the title of prime minister. He who really governs a great nation, must have a large capacity, or a quick invention; he must have, in short, some power of originating measures, fitted to the emergency on which he is called to decide. Had Lewis this talent? It is

* Mem. de Motteville, t. v.

† "Expliquez lui que je décide de toutes choses par moi-même, et que personne n'oseroit me supposer des faits contraires à la vérité." Œuvres de Louis XIV. t. vi. p. 156.

clear that he had not. His early plans of finance were evidently the plans of Colbert: his subsequent wars were projected and conducted by Louvois; the succession war, and the negotiations of his latter years, were the work of Torcy. No one can hesitate in attributing these measures to their right authors.

Choice of
Ministers.

It remains then to be seen, how he proceeded in the choice of his ministers; a part of his government of which he was even more proud than of the rest. With respect to the ministers appointed by Lewis at the beginning of his reign, we have authentic information of the grounds upon which they were selected. Tellier, Lionne, and Colbert, were the creatures of Cardinal Mazarin; had been brought forward by him out of obscurity, placed in ostensible situations, and recommended with his dying breath to the preference of his sovereign.* Mazarin himself had been a creature of Richelieu, who was first employed in political affairs by Queen Mary of Medicis. Lewis maintained in their offices two of the ministers I have mentioned as long as they lived, and afterwards gave the reversion of the places to their relations; Louvois, the son, and Barbesieux, the grandson of Tellier: Seignelai, and Torcy, the son and nephew of Colbert. In making these promotions, he seems to

* Mem. de Motteville.

have exercised little judgment, for the dissipated and profligate Barbesieux was admitted to the post of Secretary of State in his administration, as well as the skilful and industrious Torey. Thus Lewis may be said to have owed the greater part of his ministers to the judgments of Mazarin and Richelieu ; or, in other words, to the discrimination of his grandmother. When, after the death of Barbesieux, it became necessary to appoint a new minister of war, the King fixed upon Chamillard, who had been brought forward, and made intendant at St. Cyr, by Madame de Maintenon. After a short time, it became evident that Chamillard was totally unfit for his office, and he was at length driven from his post by the incessant raillery of the Court.*

The person fixed upon to supply his place was Voisin, who had become known to the King in the following manner. He was intendant at a small town on the frontier, at which Madame de Maintenon resided during the siege of Lisle. Madame Voisin spared no pains to please her powerful guest, and was fortunate enough to make her a

* Especially of the Maréchal de Boufflers, who, when Madame de Maintenon asked him who was fit for the post, said, "Fagon." Fagon was the King's physician, as before mentioned ; Boufflers showed, by a severe satirical comparison, that he would make a much better minister of war than Chamillard. See St. Simon.

present of a warm *robe-de-chambre*, at the approach of the cold weather, which happened unusually early that year, and found Madame de Maintenon unprepared to meet it. From this time, the fortune of the intendant was secured. He rose to be minister of war, and before the death of Lewis, was chancellor of the kingdom, having from first to last had nothing to recommend him but his time-serving temper. Such were the selections of Lewis. The only peculiarity that distinguishes them is, that, fearful of the eclipse of his reputation, he never appointed a minister of transcendent abilities. Of Colbert, who has the greatest celebrity of all the ministers of this period, I shall speak hereafter. Torcy, who showed considerable talents towards the end of the reign, excited such jealousy in the King, that it is said, he would not have maintained him in office much longer.* Indeed, Lewis scarcely disguises in his memoirs, his wish to keep away from his councils, any man whose capacity might dim the lustre of his own; a conduct which resembles more the policy of the acting manager of a provincial theatre, than the magnanimity of a great monarch. Yet he is not ashamed to say, when speaking of his fellow-monarchs, “ Exercising here below an office altogether divine, we ought to appear incapable of

* Massillon. Minorité de Louis XV.

the agitations which might degrade it.”* Nay, so convinced was he of his own wisdom in the selection of ministers, that he thus addresses his son. “There are undoubtedly certain functions, in which, holding as it were the place of God, we seem to participate in his knowledge, as well as his authority; as, for instance, all that regards the discernment of talents, the appointment to offices, and the distribution of rewards.”† Presumption can hardly go further.

Much has been said by the historians of these times, of the great men who surrounded the throne of Lewis; but the more we examine the subject, the less we shall be disposed to attribute the appearance of those ornaments of his reign, to the personal protection of the King. The greater part of them had already discovered their talents before Lewis took the reins of government. Their appearance is with much more reason attributed by Montesquieu, to the agitations of the minority, and the troubled times which preceded it.

Of the personal talents of Lewis for government, it is impossible to speak highly. Even the quality upon which he most prided himself, the power of attending to the details of business, being unattended by great general views, was more specious than

* *Œuvres de Louis XIV.* vol. ii. p. 34. † *Ib.* vol. ii. p. 283.

solid. At first, indeed, his determination to see every dispatch, and examine every article of expenditure, may have been politic, as a means of correcting abuses, and quickening the zeal of subordinate agents; but when this object was effected, a minute attention to every little account of clothing for a troop of horse, showed rather the pedant than the statesman; and his perseverance in writing his own dispatches to his generals, during the last twenty years of his life, is a proof rather of a puerile vanity, than of a comprehensive mind. In fact, it was by this very fondness for details, that his ministers were enabled to occupy him in minutiae, and to assume the direction of great affairs.

Personal
character.

In his private character, if private character he can be said to have had, Lewis was often generous and kind; often cold and unfeeling; he had much of the selfishness, but little of the impatience and caprice that unrestrained power is apt to engender. His behaviour to the persons immediately about him, is the best part of his conduct; and if he can be at all considered a hero, it is with respect to his *valet-de-chambre* that such a character must be allowed him. When one of his household was about to scold a servant for having made him wait, the King said, "leave him alone, he already suffers sufficiently." Another having hurt him as he was

dressing, he said to him without any anger, "bring me something to heal it." One of the valets-de-chambre asking him to recommend to the judges a cause which he was carrying on against his father-in-law, said to him, "Sir, you have only to say one word:" "That is not the difficulty," answered the King; "but tell me, if you were in the place of your father-in-law, would you wish me to say that word.)* This saying really does honour to Lewis, and indeed might serve as a maxim to all kings, who are importuned to do a private favour at the public expense. Many other sayings have been recorded, by which he endeavoured to increase the favours that he bestowed, or to relieve the pain of those who had been unfortunate in his service. When the Duke of la Rochefoucauld complained of being pressed by his creditors, he said to him, "why do you not speak to your friends?" and sent him a large sum to pay his debts. The Marquis d'Uxelles having been obliged to surrender Mayence, after a siege which, although extremely honourable, was yet criticised by the courtiers, Lewis said to him: "Your defence proves your courage, and your capitulation your talents."†

Every one knows that he said to James the Second, upon his embarking for England, "I must wish never to see you again;" and that, on taking

* Choisy, vol. i. p. 32.

† Ibid.

leave of Philip the Fifth, he pronounced the famous words, "There is now an end of the Pyrenees." This skill in always choosing the right phrase, the grace and affability of his manner, the kindness with which he tempered dignity, have been attested by his enemies as well as his admirers. It was this external polish, contrasted with the harshness of his ministers, that made the Doge of Genoa say, during his humiliating mission: "The King takes away our hearts, but his ministers give them back to us."

Fouquet
and Lau-
zun.

There is no act of decided cruelty that can be imputed to Lewis; but his behaviour to Fouquet and Lauzun must be allowed to have the character of unjust severity. Fouquet, who had been condemned by his judges to banishment for peculation, to which he had been originally tempted by Mazarin, was imprisoned by the King's order in a fortress, where he seems to have remained the whole remainder of his life.* Lauzun, after being raised by the King from the station of a private gentleman, to the highest honours, and having even received permission to marry Mademoiselle, the King's cousin, was sent, without any manifest offence, to the same fortress of Pignerol, where

* A passage of Gourville is quoted, to show that Fouquet was at liberty before he died; but had the fact been so, his relations would have known and published it.

Fouquet was confined. The behaviour of this person may, indeed, have afforded grounds for a dislike on the part of Lewis, but his former transgressions had been pardoned, and ought to have been forgotten.* It may be here mentioned, however, that upon a particular occasion, the behaviour of Lewis towards Lauzun was at once so dignified and so temperate, that St. Simon reckons it the finest action of his life. Lauzun called upon the King to perform his promise of making him master of the artillery, and upon his refusal, turned his back, broke the blade of his sword with his foot, and cried out in a passion, “that he never would serve a prince who had so shamefully broken his word.” The King opened the window and threw out his cane, saying, that he should be sorry to strike a man of rank. Lewis in this instance certainly showed great command of temper, but his remark might have been more liberal and more humane. It would have been unbecoming in him to have struck any man, though not of rank.†

* St. Simon, so fertile in court anecdotes, relates a story of Lauzun hiding himself under Madame de Montespan’s bed, and afterwards reproaching her with the conversation he had heard her hold respecting him to the King. The offence was a gross one, but surely not sufficient to justify many years of imprisonment.

† St. Simon, vol. x. p. 129. See also J. J. Rousseau’s

Ignorance
of Lewis.

Lewis was throughout his life an ignorant man. His education in this respect had been purposely neglected by Cardinal Mazarin. La Porte, his first valet-de-chambre, informs us that he used to read to the King, when in bed, the History of France, by Mezerai;* and that the King took much interest in these readings; but that the Cardinal, upon discovering one evening what was passing, was much displeased, and said La Porte was acting as tutor to the King. We might have some doubts as to the truth of the narrative of so decided an enemy to Mazarin as La Porte, were not his testimony confirmed by Lewis himself. In relating the events of the year 1666, when he was nearer thirty than twenty, he takes occasion to inform his son, that, at that time, he began to read history, because he thought it a disgrace not to know what the greater part of the world knew.† It does not appear however, nor is it likely, that, after that age, and in the course of a busy life, he made any great progress in knowledge. Of ecclesiastical history and theology he seems to have been totally ignorant. His limited information in this respect is the more to be regretted, as his religious zeal, unenlightened by knowledge, produced remarks on this scene, in his Letter to d'Alembert, Sur les Spectacles.

* La Porte, p. 182. † Œuvres de Louis XIV., vol. ii. p. 225.

some of the greatest calamities of his reign. Indeed, it is singularly unfortunate that his piety was not less fatal to his people than his worldly passions, and that he did at least as much mischief to mankind by his devotion to what he supposed to be the will of heaven, as by the indulgence of his illicit love, his ambition, and vain glory.

I cannot omit, in summing up the character of Lewis, what were, perhaps, the most striking of all his qualities, his extreme pride and vanity. These passions were so conspicuous in him, that one of his descendants, himself a king, pronounced them to be the great defect of his character.* To his pride must be attributed much of his political conduct, his quarrels with Spain and Rome

His pride
and vanity

* Œuvres de Louis XIV. t. iii. p. 20. "When Lewis the Sixteenth," says General Grimoard, "ordered me to prepare an edition of the Works of Lewis the Fourteenth, he told me that I must not conceal his errors or his faults; that, for instance, he had formed for himself an exaggerated notion of greatness, which kept him in a continual and almost theatrical representation; that on the other hand, flattery had rendered him vain; and that as the work with which he entrusted me, was destined for the instruction of the human race, he would be obliged to me if I would point out these defects, and show how much greater Lewis the Fourteenth would have been, if, instead of pride, which makes men ridiculous, he had possessed real elevation and dignified simplicity." The sentence I have here abridged, does great honour to Lewis the Sixteenth.

about precedence, and in part the war against Holland, in 1672. His vanity, on the other hand, made him delight in the extravagant praises that were bestowed upon him, and believe in the most insincere panegyrics of his courtiers. He listened with rapture to the operas in which his own feats were celebrated, and could be seen to repeat, between his teeth, the words of the stanzas which were most full of adulation. He even sung in private, (although he had neither ear nor voice for music) the parts of lyric poems which abounded in exaggerated description of his actions, and when he did so, his eyes filled with tears.* This well known quality of Lewis exposed him to the ridicule of his enemies. Prince Eugene, upon taking a town in Flanders, caused to be repeated before him the most fulsome prologues of Quinault, in the presence of some French officers; and William the Third, upon hearing some singers on the stage begin an ode in his praise, rose, and exclaimed: "Turn out those people; do they take me for the King of France?"†

Flattery
of the court.

It must at the same time be confessed, that Lewis was pursued by flattery in a manner which affords much excuse for his faults of every description. One or two of the most extraordinary

* St. Simon, vol. i. p. 33.

† Voltaire, Siècle de Louis XIV.

effects of the common and general spirit may be worth relating. In 1666, La Feuillade, a private gentleman, hearing that St. Aunay, a person who had left the kingdom from discontent, had written a letter, and afterwards adopted a device, disparaging to the King of France, went to Madrid and sent him a challenge: upon which St. Aunay made an apology for his conduct.* This gallantry of adulation being found extremely acceptable, the same person erected a statue to Lewis on the Place des Victoires. The statue was inaugurated, or rather consecrated, with music and genuflections: La Feuillade went three times round it, at the head of the regiment of guards, making the same prostrations that were made by the Romans before their deified emperors: the event was celebrated by illuminations; the inscription placed on the base was, "Viro immortalis;" and the author of this pompous flattery intended to have kept a lamp burning there by day as well as by night.† The lamp, however, was ordered not to be lighted in the day-time, and an image of the virgin veiled in some degree the gross idolatry of the original intention. After the defeat of Marshal Créqui in 1675, the same La Feuillade came post to Versailles, where he went directly to the King, and

* Œuvres de Louis XIV., t. ii. p. 193.

† Choisy, l. ii. p. 9.

said, "Sire, some make their wives come to them to the army; others come to see them; for my part, I come to see your Majesty for an hour, and thank you a thousand and a thousand times; I shall see no one but your Majesty, for to your Majesty I owe every thing." He talked for some time, and then said, "Sire, I am now going; I beg of you to make my compliments to the Queen, to the Dauphin, and to my wife and children." He then set off on his return to the army, and left the King much pleased with his adroit flattery.*

It may be useful, however, in a moral view, to record the result of this exquisite and inimitable adulation. La Feuillade was left for many years without any reward; at length he received the highest honours, and was made a Duke. He did not enjoy these honours long however, dying the same year with Louvois. Some time afterwards the King was sitting at supper at Marly, with some ladies; the Count de Marsan was speaking behind the table of the great things his Majesty had done at the siege of Mons. "It is true," said the King, "that was a lucky year for me; I got rid of three men I could no longer bear, M. de Louvois, Seignelai, and La Feuillade." "Why then," said the Duchess of Orleans, in her blunt way, "did you not dismiss them?" The King

* Sévigné, 15th August, 1675.

looked down on his plate, and Monsieur de Marsan stammered something about persons disagreeable to the King, and yet useful to the state.*

One or two more instances of this gross flattery may be mentioned. When Lewis was old, he was complaining to the Cardinal d'Estrées that he had lost his teeth. "Ah, Sir," said the courtier, "who has any teeth?" displaying at the same time, by a broad grin, a mouth well provided with the strongest grinders. Another member of the clergy, the Abbé, afterwards Cardinal de Polignac, walking one day with Lewis in the gardens of Marly in a splendid dress, a shower of rain came on. The King observed he would get wet. "Sire," said the Abbé, "the rain of Marly does not wet." The bishop of Noyon founded a prize at the academy for a panegyric in perpetuity upon Lewis the Fourteenth. The academy itself, however, was not behind hand in adulation. Upon the death of Corneille, there was some question of electing the Duke of Maine. The academy sent him a message by their secretary, that even if their number were full, there was not one of their body who would not willingly die to make room for him.†

Of all kinds of praise, however, the most grate-

* Choisy, t. ii. p. 95.

† *Esprit du Mercure de France*, t. i. p. 84.

Bossuet. ful to the royal ear must have been that which flowed from the pulpit. What "sweet oblivious antidote" could so tend to lull the conscience of Lewis, as to hear his eulogy issue from those lips that were consecrated to the service of God; what flattery so insidious, as that which flows from a tongue sworn to pay no respect to persons? Of this species of adulation, Lewis received an ample offering in the eloquent language of Bossuet. Speaking of the talents of the Duchess of Orleans, he says, "But why dilate upon a subject where every thing can be said in one word? The King, whose judgment is a certain rule, has valued the capacity of the princess, and placed it by his esteem above all our praises."* In describing the death of the Queen as inevitable, he says, "What could so many faithful servants assembled round her bed do to save her? What could the King himself do?"† In extolling the conquests and bloody wars of his master, he exclaims, "If the French can do every thing, it is because the King is every where their captain."‡ "After the King was deprived of these two great commanders (Turenne and Condé), we see him conceive greater designs; execute greater things;

* Oraison Funèbre de la Duchesse d'Orléans.

† Oraison Funèbre de Marie Th. d'Autriche.

‡ Oraison Funèbre de Marie Th. d'Autriche.

rise above himself; surpass both the hopes of his subjects, and the expectations of the universe; so high is his courage, so vast his intelligence, so glorious his destiny!"* Such was the tone of the sermons, of the funeral sermons of Bossuet. It is impossible to carry adulation further than this. To tell Lewis that he was a great general, was the way of all others to captivate his favour, and the bishop of Meaux must be allowed to be the most skilful of all his flatterers. Yet our admiration of the address of the supple courtier, must give way to our indignation at the servility of the Christian bishop. Bold must be the impiety, or grovelling the soul, or strong the delusion of that man, who can venture to adulterate the spiritual food he is ordained to distribute, and pervert, to the purposes of human ambition, the oracles of eternal justice. Scarcely, indeed, was it possible that human nature should resist falsehoods from such a mouth, and so administered. The perpetual repetition of such language as I have quoted, must in time have corrupted the strongest mind, and rooted out every trace of humility from the heart to which it was addressed. Thus it is, that Kings come in time to lose all sympathy with their fellow men; they imagine themselves a kind of superior being, and are fully persuaded that the sacrifice of interest, happiness,

* Oraison Funèbre du Prince de Condé.

and even life in their behalf, is no more than what is justly due to the rank in which they have been placed. No wonder then that Lewis always obliged the persons around him to obey his slightest inclination, at the risk of their health, or with the loss of their whole fortune : he was taught that he was the special favourite of heaven, and he expected to be treated as a delegate of God.

CHAPTER II.

Absolute Power of Lewis. The Provincial States. The Parliament. The Nobility. The Army. The Church. Etiquette. The Court. Versailles and Marly. Madame de la Vallière. Madame de Montespan. Madame de Maintenon. Manners of the Court during the reign of the three favourites. Poisoning.

IN the last Chapter we have taken a view of the personal qualities of Lewis the Fourteenth. It is now time to consider the nature of the power he enjoyed, and the use he made of it during his long reign.

Lewis was from the year 1660, to his death, totally absolute and unlimited in the exercise of sovereignty. Every assembly or body, which had formerly been a check upon the royal prerogative, was humbled or annihilated. The States General had never assembled since the year 1614, and they had at that time been productive of so little advantage to the country, that there was not the slightest wish for their revival.

In those provinces called *pays d'états*, the States

Absolute
power.

Provincial
States.

continued to be assembled, but having no concert with the rest of the kingdom, and indeed no desire for freedom, their assemblies were rather occasions for granting money, than for discussing grievances; their meeting and dissolution were attended with pomp and parade, but with no real utility to the country.

As an instance of the manner in which these assemblies were held, I may refer to a description of one of the meetings of the States of Brittany in a letter of Madame de Sévigné. After a very lively account of a great dinner, and the drinking of healths, she says, "The States will not last long; there is only to ask what the King wishes, not a word is said, and all is over. As for the governor, he finds, I know not how, that more than 40,000 crowns come to his share. An infinite number of presents, of pensions, repairs of roads and of towns, fifteen or twenty great tables, continual play, eternal balls, plays three times a week, a great show; such are the States. I forgot, however, three or four hundred pipes of wine that are drunk; but if I forgot it, others do not, and it is the principal thing."* Her subsequent accounts tally completely with this short description; we find immense presents given at the conclusion of the assembly, and a remark made by a by-stander,

* Sévigné, 5th August, 1671, l. 122.

that he supposes the States are about to die, and are making their will, as they are disposing of all their property. Two thousand louis were given to the Duchess of Chaulnes, the wife of the governor, and in one morning the presents voted by the States amounted to 100,000 crowns.* The behaviour of the States of Languedoc was still more servile. Completely subject to the episcopal body, they never hesitated to grant to the King subsidies which did not weigh upon themselves, and eagerly sought, in the favour of the court, a compensation for sacrifices which they obliged others to undergo. From them came the first experiment of a capitation tax, the obvious inequality of which is repugnant to all sound ideas of finance.†

While such was the general conduct of the Provincial States, their separation from one another rendered perfectly useless any occasional opposition they might make. If once or twice during the reign of Lewis, the states of one province, or the people of another, showed symptoms of discontent, the monarch, supported by the rest of France, had strength fully sufficient to subsist without their revenues, and to suppress their partial and insulated insurrections. Thus Lewis, fortunate in every thing, derived as much advantage from

* Sévigné, 30th August 1671, l. 133. † Duclos, t. i.

the divided privileges of the subject, as from the concentrated power of the Government.

The Par-
liament.

The Parliament opposed as little resistance to the will of the monarch as the Provincial States. In 1667, it was ordered that the Parliament should, in the first place, register with obedience the King's edicts, and never make any representation or remonstrance, but in the course of eight days after. Six weeks were allowed for courts of justice at a distance. This edict was renewed in 1673,* and so exactly obeyed, that Lewis scarcely received a remonstrance from any court of judicature during the course of his reign. A representation from the Parliament of Paris, in 1709, on the arbitrary and fraudulent alterations of the standard of gold and silver, which produced no effect,† may be quoted as a singular exception. In 1669, Lewis even proceeded so far in his dislike to Parliaments, as to revoke the privileges of nobility, which had been granted to the magistracy in 1664. But, notwithstanding this edict, the custom subsisted of allowing nobility to all persons whose fathers had

* The words of the edict are; " We desire that our courts register purely and simply our letters patent without any modification, restriction, or other clause that may impede or delay their full and entire execution." Mably, *Observations sur l'Histoire de France*, l. viii. c. 6. note.

† Voltaire, c. 30.

served twenty years, or had died in any judicial office belonging to a superior court.*

Lewis was fully conscious of his own extent of power, and did not fail to build upon it the most lofty assumptions, and the most extravagant pretensions, to which a European monarch ever arrived. In writing for the instruction of his son, after dilating upon the danger and mischief of popular assemblies, he adds, "But I dwell too long upon a reflection that may seem to you to be useless, or which, at most, can only serve to make you sensible of *the misfortune of our neighbours*; since it is certain that, in the state where you are to reign after me, you will find no authority that will not esteem it an honour to derive from you its origin and its character; no assembly, whose opinions will dare to go beyond the terms of respect; no company, which will not believe itself obliged to place its principal greatness in the good of your service, and its only security in its humble submission."†

He had the same unbounded notions with respect to the right of property. In addressing his son on the subject of the property of the Church, he says, "You must, in the first place, be persuaded that Kings are absolute masters (*seigneurs*

His own
notions
of his
authority.

* Voltaire, c. 60. † Œuvres de Louis XIV., vol. ii. p. 28.

absolus), and HAVE NATURALLY THE FULL AND FREE DISPOSITION OF ALL THE PROPERTY THAT IS POSSESSED, AS WELL BY THE CHURCH AS BY LAYMEN, TO USE IT AT ALL TIMES AS WISE MANAGERS, THAT IS TO SAY, ACCORDING TO THE GENERAL WANTS OF THE STATE."* Notwithstanding this positive language, it is said that Lewis felt scruples when, in his latter years, it was proposed to him to levy as a tax, the tenth of all the revenues of the kingdom. Le Tellier offered to consult the casuists of his society. In a few days he returned, and told his master he need have no scruples, since he was the true proprietor of all the lands and goods in the kingdom. "You have relieved my mind," said the King; "I am now easy."† In the former instance, Lewis spoke as an absolute monarch; in the latter, as the slave of the monks.

In a course of the public law of France, drawn up under the direction of Torcy for the perusal of the Duke of Burgundy, we find this commencement: "France is a monarchical state in the utmost extent of the term. The King represents the whole nation, and every other person represents only a single individual with respect to the King.... The nation does not constitute a body in

* Œuvres, de Louis XIV., vol. ii. p. 121.

† Duclos, t. i.

France. The whole nation resides in the person of the King.* Lewis expressed this last maxim in two words, by saying, in answer to a magistrate who spoke to him of the state, "I am the state." "*L'état c'est moi.*"

The next question that excites our curiosity, is to know how Lewis contrived to preserve his immense power without being disturbed, during his long reign, by any serious insurrection. How was it that, omitting the mad attempt of a Chevalier de Rohan, whom no one seconded, and the troubles on the subject of the Protestants, of which he was himself the sole exciting cause, a general and passive obedience attended him in defeat as well as in victory, in poverty as well as in prosperity, in the days of his humiliation, as in those of his glory? If the States-general and the Parliaments were neglected as unsuitable to the genius of the nation, yet what had become of that selfish and turbulent nobility, who, reduced as they had been by Richelieu, still were in strength sufficient to disturb and nearly overpower his minority? To

The
Nobility.

* "La France est un état monarchique dans toute l'étendue de l'expression. Le Roi y représente la nation entière, et chaque particulier ne représente qu'un seul individu envers le Roi. La nation ne fait pas corps en France. Elle reside toute entière dans la personne du Roi." Lémontey in the *Nouveaux Mémoires de Dangeau*, p. 327.

solve these questions, we must first lay down as a general rule, that in order to make the French nation of that day live contented under their Government, it was necessary to satisfy two kinds of vanity, the national, and the personal. A Frenchman of that time desired, and almost demanded with all the energy of his character, first, that the French nation should be distinguished from all other nations; and, secondly, that he himself should be distinguished, or have hopes of being distinguished from all other Frenchmen. Lewis was formed by nature, as well as disposed from policy, to gratify both ambitions. It was to satisfy the first of these wants, that he entered into wars remarkable for their insolence of pretension, and assumption of superiority over the rest of Europe. If by the haughtiness of his language, and the violence of his aggressions, he roused the spirit of all foreign nations to oppose his arms, he, in the same degree, administered fuel to the pride of the French people, and excited them to the support of his throne. The splendour of his court, the encouragement given to the fine arts, the disdain with which the other powers of Europe were treated, the glitter and the glare which attended their King in whatever he did, and wherever he went, were all subjects of lively gratification to France. By the protection given at the

same time to the army and the church, poets, architects and sculptors, manufacturers and merchants, every kind of activity was set in motion, and the enterprising genius of the nation found ample field for exertion and distinction.

To satisfy the personal vanity of the nobility, may be supposed to have been a more difficult task. The undertaking became the more necessary, and at the same time more delicate, as Lewis was determined to extinguish for ever that old factious aristocracy, which, during the reigns of his predecessors, had disturbed the kingdom, and shaken the throne.

The last person who maintained the state and dignity of the Épernons and the Joyeuses, was Villeroi, Archbishop of Lyons, who died in 1693. Long before this time, the character of the great nobility had entirely changed. Instead of being followed, as their ancestors had been, by a train of noble companions in the provinces, over whom they had far more authority than the King, the great lords of the court became entirely separated from the smaller nobility. The measures taken by Lewis in the beginning of his reign, the suppression of disorders, the strict execution of the laws, and the internal peace which followed, entirely dissolved the confederacy which had so long subsisted between the superior lords and their dependent

gentry. Hence arose the distinctions of nobility of the court, and nobility of the provinces, not only separate in their manner of life, but jealous and hostile in their feelings towards each other. The nobility, or gentry of the country, remained at their castles, without union, without influence, and with no other occupations than to cultivate their lands, follow the King in war, con over their pedigree, and oppress their peasantry. The nobility of the court, on the other hand, were obliged to look for distinctions from the King, as the only source of illustration. It so happened, that the greater part of the old high nobility had been cut off by civil war, or the judicial carnage of Richelieu, and those who now held the first rank in the state, were by no means equally distinguished in blood. Many of them were of recent illustration, and few of them could boast a descent equally splendid with that of the more ancient of the provincial nobles. It therefore became the more easy for Lewis, to deprive them of any share of the royal power. In the fifty-four years which elapsed from the death of Mazarin to that of the King, with the exception of Marshal Villars, who sat only during a few months, the Duke of Beauvilliers was the only nobleman admitted to his council.* While he thus excluded his nobles, he augmented the great-

* St. Simon.

ness of his ministers, who, from the plain black dress, cloak and band, which had hitherto marked them, became persons of consequence, imitating princes of the blood in riches and splendour. But Lewis knew that he could depress as well as raise them; they were the creatures of his will, and the submissive organs of his pleasure. From this promotion of men of business to the highest offices of state, and the determination of Lewis to have the gaze of the world wholly fixed upon himself, there came to be certain families in which these offices seemed to be hereditary. Thus, Colbert, originally a creature of Mazarin, as I have before mentioned, was minister of finance; Colbert de Croissy, his brother, secretary of state for foreign affairs; Torcy, his nephew, the same; Seignelai, his son, minister of marine. In the same way Le Tellier, another creature of Mazarin, was chancellor; Louvois, his son, minister of war; Barbesieux, his grandson, the same. Thus likewise Paul Phelippeaux de Pontchartrain, after being a clerk in the office of M. Villeroy, was made secretary of state by Mary of Medicis. He was succeeded by his younger son, who was followed by his son, the Duke of La Vrilliere, secretary of state for sixty-two years, during the reigns of Lewis the Thirteenth and Lewis the Fourteenth. He was again succeeded by his son, known by the

name of M. de Chateauneuf, who died in 1700. His son, the Duke of La Vrilliere, took his place, and was followed in 1725 by his son, the Count of St. Florentin. Another descendant of the original Pontchartrain, after being minister of finance, and minister of marine, became chancellor, and left the marine to his son. The son of this last was M. de Maurepas, who had the singular fate of being in office under the Regent, and afterwards prime minister of Lewis the Sixteenth. In this patrimonial distribution of office, even the family of Fouquet was not omitted. M. de Belleisle, a grandson of Fouquet, obtained, by the favour of Boufflers, a place of considerable importance, during the life of Lewis the Fourteenth, and became a great personage under the reign of his successor.* Thus France had an hereditary ministry, as well as an hereditary king.

The army monopolized by the nobility.

In order to compensate to the nobility for the loss of all real power, the King of France reserved for them rank in the army, and the greater part of the benefices of the church. But in the army especially, all distinction was monopolized by the nobility. When war was proclaimed, they hastened to fill the commands allotted to them by their monarch, and their valiant spirit well obtained for

* See an account of the ministerial families in the *Essays* of M. d'Argenson, t. i.

them the high but perilous honours of leading armies, and defending besieged towns. No sooner was a campaign announced, than Paris and the court were utterly deserted by all the nobility; and if one young man of rank staid behind, he was considered a singular, if not a disgraceful exception.*

It was, indeed, far more easy for Lewis to encourage and reward, than to moderate and restrain, the valour of his nobility. They still retained the spirit and restlessness of the old leaders of the Franks; to afford scope for their courage and love of enterprize, was even one of the chief objects of the monarch in entering upon his wars of ambition. "So many brave men whom I saw in arms for my service," he says previously to his first war, "seemed to solicit me every hour, to furnish matter for the employment of their valour."† All men of rank at this time, appear to have had commissions in the army; but till they rose to the rank of colonel, they did not advance by seniority, and were thus immediately under the influence of the King.

It must be confessed, that the monopoly of the

* See the Letters of Madame de Maintenon, and those of Madame de Sévigné, especially the remark of the latter on the Duke of Sully.

† Œuvres de Louis XIV.

army by the nobility, was an injustice to a great part of France, who were thereby debarred from the fair chance of promotion, to which their talents might entitle them. Yet the nobility comprehended by far the greater part of the gentry of the country, and the chief result of the practice was, to confine the command of the military force to the general aristocracy of the kingdom. It must be owned, likewise, that as long as the army was in the field, the nobles did their duty well; but as soon as the campaign was over, or peace was restored, these brilliant heroes returned to the court, to receive from their king and their mistresses the meed of well-earned fame. As their love of action was one of the chief motives of Lewis for going to war, so likewise to gratify their love of pleasure and pomp, was one of his chief occupations during peace. The tournaments, the galas, the plays, which he instituted, while they pleased his own pride and vanity, had likewise a politic end, which he himself has avowed in his instructions to his son. They brought his nobles near his person, and accustomed them to look for diversion, as well as for honour and fame, in the presence of their master. The useful hospitality and solid protection of the ancient castles, were exchanged for the diamond necklaces and glittering equipages of the modern court. The objects of

ambition of a great lord no longer consisted in the sway he held over his vassals, and his influence with the warlike cavaliers of his neighbourhood, but in the distinction he obtained among his equals in the drawing-room, and in the smiles of a monarch, too happy to exchange a gracious manner against a formidable power.

With respect to the Church, it was the custom to give benefices to the younger sons of noble families, who pleaded a real, or affected poverty. Until the year 1687, when Père La Chaise alarmed the conscience of the King on this subject, laymen even were allowed to hold benefices, and pensions on benefices. But at all times, nobility and family connection were the great reasons for bestowing preferment in the church.* The patronage in the power of the crown seems to have been immense. The episcopal body was chiefly formed of the younger sons of the nobility. It is true, indeed, that the court promoted Massillon, who rose from the ranks of the people by his merit; but the prodigious amount of ecclesiastical preferment,

The
Church.

* " I have read an enormous quantity of letters and petitions to ask for benefices. The necessity of restoring a ruined family, or of supporting brothers and nephews in the army, was urged in all. In a few, the virtues of the candidate were mentioned, but always as a secondary consideration." Lémontey, 337.

enabled the King to choose some of his church dignitaries from among persons of learning and piety, without prejudice to the general purpose of influencing the nobility.

A large class of persons known by the name of Abbés, formed a singular and anomalous part of the church. An Abbé was a person who had received a tonsure, and belonged to one of the four orders of the church, inferior in rank to sub-deacons. This apparently humble situation was attended with great advantages. These members of the church might enjoy rich benefices: and they might also at any time renounce the profession, and marry, or enter the army. Indeed, many young men of family were both volunteers in the army, and servants of the altar: at once soldiers and clergymen, they left it to chance to decide whether their fortune might be pursued more advantageously in the military or the ecclesiastical line.* Even ladies were allowed to hold rich abbeys, and other lucrative preferment in the church.

Etiquette. There were other means, however, still more curious than military commissions, rich benefices,

* La jeunesse en entrant dans le monde prenoit le parti qui bon lui sembloit. Qui vouloit se faisoit chevalier; abbé qui pouvoit; j'entends *abbé à bénéfice*. L'habit ne distinguoit point le chevalier de l'abbé, et je crois que le chevalier de Grammont étoit l'un et l'autre au siège de Trin. Mem. de Grammont, c. 2.

and splendid entertainments, by which Lewis attached his nobility to his person. It so happened that at the period of his accession, nothing was esteemed of more importance than the vain science of etiquette. Two instances will show the extreme value attached by the courtiers, and even by Lewis himself, to the honours and distinctions of the royal palace.

At the very beginning of the reign, a dispute broke out between the Countess of Soissons, Surintendante of the Queen's household, and the Duchess of Navailles, first *Dame d'Honneur*. The office of *Surintendante* being of new creation, the limits of the rights of each had never been accurately fixed; Lewis, to settle the dispute, decreed that the *Surintendante* should present the napkin, and likewise the shift, and that the *Dame d'Honneur* should have precedence in the carriage, and a choice of apartments. The Duchess of Navailles conceived herself so much injured by this decision, that she asked permission to resign and leave the court. The King, to console her, gave an explanation, that if she had begun the service at dinner, she should not be obliged to give up the napkin to her rival. He also represented to her the extreme importance of having the first place in the carriage. As for the choice of apartments, to which more vulgar disputants would

have attached some value, neither of the ladies seem to have thought of it a moment. The Countess of Soissons, in her turn, felt herself wronged by the explanation. She was so much hurt, that she obliged the Count of Soissons to send a challenge to the Duke of Navailles. The Duke of Navailles, however, refused to meet him, not because the subject did not deserve it, but because the King had prohibited duels.

A more serious occasion, in which Lewis showed the very great importance he himself attached to etiquette, happened in 1666, when his brother, the Duke of Orleans, requested that the Duchess, his wife, might have a chair with a back to it, in the Queen's presence. "The friendship I had for him," says Lewis, "would have made me wish never to deny him any thing, but seeing of what consequence this was, I instantly gave him to understand, with all possible mildness, that I could not satisfy him on this point."* The anxiety and disappointment shown by the Duchess of Orleans on this subject, was such as to lead to a first, but long and almost irreparable coolness between the brothers. Yet so confirmed was Lewis in his opinion of the justness of his decision, that in his instructions to his son, he speaks of the right of having at court a chair with a back to it, as one of

* Œuvres de Louis XIV. t. ii. p. 64.

the "principal advantages" of royalty, as belonging to the preeminence which forms the "principal beauty" of his station; and even as one "of the number of the rights of the crown, which never can be legally alienated."* How profound!

By means of the value thus affixed to these vain distinctions, Lewis had the skill to form a new magazine of patronage, which, without costing him any thing, excited the desires, occupied the attention, and satisfied the ambition of the dukes and peers of France. By carefully avoiding to make the laws of etiquette too clear, he contrived to have continual appeals to himself: the most solemn rights of precedence, as that great worshipper of forms, the Duke of St. Simon, has complained, became totally uncertain, and the subjects of Lewis had as little security for their rank at court, as for their properties and persons.

When Lewis had once established the opinion, that he was the unlimited lord of the greatest monarchy of Europe, the slightest marks of favour became objects of ambition to men who, like the French, are eager for all kinds of reputation. It is for this reason we find, in the memoirs of Dangeau, an assiduous courtier, far more notice of the disputes for little honours at Versailles, than of the rise and fall of the state, the happiness or

* Œuvres de Louis XIV. t. ii. p. 66.

misery of the nation. Two of the most illustrious nobility contend for the honour of giving the King his cloak. An old courtier solicits the permission to have the *entrée*, or admittance to the royal apartment at certain hours. He alleges a ground of claim to that extraordinary fortune. It is rejected. He advances another plea which he hopes may be valid. It is rejected. He advances a third plea, with a trembling anxiety and diminished hopes, when the King graciously admits the reason to be good, and crowns his enterprize with success. The King, from some accident, requires a fresh hat when he is out a-walking. The hat is brought by a person called a *portemanteau*, but the object is by no means accomplished. A dispute arises, which of two high officers of state is to present the hat to the King. The Duke of Tresmes presents it: the Duke of La Rochefoucauld complains, and this grave matter disturbs an old friendship, and destroys the peace and tranquillity of the court.*

In 1661 Lewis made a promotion of eight prelates, and sixty-three knights of the order of St. Esprit, which had not received any new knights since 1633, and seems to have fallen into neglect, if not contempt.

* Dangeau, Lémontey, 4 Nov. 1706.

On this occasion the King remarks, in his instructions to his son, that “no recompense costs less to our people, and none touches hearts that are rightly constituted more, than these distinctions of rank, *which are almost the first motive of all human actions*, but especially of the greatest and most noble; it is, besides, one of the most visible effects of our power to give, when we please, an infinite value to that which in itself is nothing.”* It is indeed one of the most surprising instances of the power of kings, and the fatuity of subjects! On the same solid grounds, the King afterwards created a new order, and called it by his own name. The *just-au-corps à brevet*, was another and very peculiar invention for distinction. It was a coat or jacket of blue, embroidered with gold and silver, similar to one used by the King, which entitled the wearer to accompany his Majesty in his promenades at St. Germain, and to belong to his parties to Versailles or Marly. One of these brevets signed by Lewis, and countersigned Guenegaud, is preserved in the collection of the works of Lewis the Fourteenth.†

* Œuvres de Louis XIV. t. i. p. 143.

† The editor says, there was no further question of them after the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, in 1679. This does not appear to be the case. St. Simon talks of seeing the sons of the Dauphin dressed in them; and Dangeau mentions

Only a certain number were allowed; and on the death of a member, his jacket became as great a subject of contention, as the armour of Achilles in the Grecian army. This desirable distinction seems at bottom to have been a hunting-coat.

A more important honour was that of having the *entrées*. There were three principal classes of these, the great *entrées*, the little *entrées*, and the *brevets d'affaires*, which was something less than the *entrées* of the gentlemen of the chamber, but greater than any other. But we shall understand this better, by giving a moment's attention to the day of Lewis in the later years of his greatness.

Arrange-
ment of
the day.

At eight o'clock the valet-de-chambre, who slept in his room, waked him. The first physician, the first surgeon, and the nurse came in together; the two former rubbed him. At a quarter past eight, the great chamberlain and the *grandes entrées* came in: they staid only a minute. One of these opened the curtain, gave holy water, and a prayer-book. When the King had said his prayers, the same persons returned, and gave him his dressing-gown. After this the *secondes entrées* came in; then all persons of distinction; then all

the death of a person who had the *just-au-corps rose*, long after the period mentioned. The distinction of *just-au-corps bleu*, and *just-au-corps rose*, is a mystery which my researches do not enable me to explain.

the court; by this time he was putting on his boots or shoes. When he was dressed, he prayed in public at the foot of his bed. He went into his cabinet with those who had the *entrées*, gave orders for the day, and saw those whom he wished in private audiences. After this he went to mass; in going and returning any one might speak to him, provided only that the captain of the guards was first informed. After mass, a council was held, except on Thursdays and Fridays. Dinner was at one o'clock; the King dined alone, and always *au petit couvert*, or *très petit couvert*; either of these consisted of three courses, besides fruit. The great chamberlain, or the first gentleman of the chamber, served the King. Every one present stood except Monsieur, to whom the King always offered a chair. The Dauphin and other princes stood. The *grand couvert*, disused in the latter part of the reign, was a more magnificent spectacle. To see the King eat, seems to have been one of the rights and privileges preserved, though rarely enjoyed, by the great nobility and gentry of France. Every one could not look on this show with the philosophy of Madame de Sévigné, who says, "I have seen this scene. The King and Queen eat in a melancholy way (*tristement*). Madame de Richelieu* is seated, and then the ladies

* Dame d'Honneur to the Queen.

according to their dignities, some seated, the others standing; those who have not dined, are ready to snatch the dishes; those who have, are suffocated by the smell of the meat; so that the company is all in a state of suffering.”* Neither the presence nor the suffering of the courtiers, however, spoilt the appetite of the King. “I have often,” says the Duchess of Orleans, “seen the King eat four plates of soup, a whole pheasant, a partridge, a large platefull of salad, mutton with gravy and with garlic, two good slices of ham, and a platefull of pastry, besides fruit and sweet-meats.”† After dinner the King retired for a short time to his room, and then went out a-hunting, or a-shooting, which he was very fond of, and indeed found necessary for his health. He always went to a stag hunt once a week, and at Marly and Fontainebleau much oftener.

In his younger days he was very fond of play. Latterly, his evening was spent in the room of Madame de Maintenon. Towards nine o'clock, while the King was doing business with his ministers, or conversing, two waiting maids came to undress her. When she was in bed, the King spoke to her for a short time, till his captain of the guards appeared at the door, and told him

* 22d January, 1674, t. 285.

† Mémoires de Madame, p. 51.

supper was ready. He then shut the curtains of her bed and went to supper.

The supper was always *au grand couvert*, with music; at Versailles none but his own family sat down; at other places the ladies of the court. The most distinguished of the nobility and courtiers attended. After supper he spent an hour with his family; he then wished them good night, which was a signal of a fresh beginning of an audience of the *grandes et petites entrées* called the *coucher*. When these persons had done discussing business, and he had finished undressing, he got to bed. Thus concluded the day between twelve and one o'clock.

To any person not brought up in harness, a life spent so entirely in company, so many hours devoted to persons whom it was impossible, however desirable, to exclude, and the entire want of privacy and ease, would be insupportable. Lewis the Fourteenth is one of the few men to whom continual representation was agreeable. He was, as Lord Bolingbroke truly said, the best actor of Majesty that ever filled a throne. No part of the state ceremony was without its purpose; and in the course of a day spent altogether in public, he found numberless occasions of distinguishing the courtiers who best pleased him. Among others the *tabouret de grace*, or permission for a lady to

Distinc-
tions.

sit upon a stool in the Queen's presence, was a matter, which then, as in the time of the Fronde, was a spring to the most lofty ambition, and occupied the talents of the most powerful and able men in France. A place in the King's or Queen's carriage was another distinction, which occasioned as many jealousies and heart-burnings as the stool itself. The King often used this favour, as a means of satisfying those whom he had otherwise offended or neglected. "A place in the carriage," says Madame de Sévigné, "is a consolation for every thing."

All these minutiae, all these genera and species of favour, were the wheels and pullies by which the great machine of government was moved. We no longer see the nobles retiring to their strong holds, fortifying their towns, and threatening insurrection. In times of danger they were employed in the army, and found a vent for their high spirit in the perils and glory of war. In time of peace, and during the interval between the campaigns, these same brave and adventurous men trembled at the aspect of their King, pined at his frown, and died of his displeasure.* The artificial honours of a vain court, were the

* St. Simon attributes the death of the Prince de Conti to his being in disgrace at Court. He says the same thing of Boufflers, but with less apparent reason.

objects of the only men in France who had any real talents or natural importance. Even St. Simon, a man of keen and satirical humour, of sharp observation, and rigid morality, who is so capable of destroying the illusion of the court of the great monarch, who leaves no person unsatirized, no weakness respected, spent the greater part of his career in a struggle to procure for the Dukes and Peers of France, a precedence over the illegitimate sons of Lewis. When he gained his point during the Regency, and obtained a decree according to his wishes, he thus describes the sensations he experienced: "Impressed with all that joy can give, of what is most keen and most exhilarating, with the most delightful emotion, with the gratification of my most fervent desires, I burnt with anguish at being obliged to restrain my transport; and this anguish was itself a delight which I have never experienced either before or after this great day. How inferior the pleasures of the senses are to those of the mind!" Who would imagine that this able man was here describing the feelings produced by an edict, which ordered that the President of the Parliament should no longer take off his hat to the illegitimate sons of Lewis the Fourteenth!

There is one anecdote, however, that might make us suspect Lewis himself was not ignorant

of the real value of what he gave. An officer applied for the cross of St. Lewis: the King told him he should have a pension instead. He replied that he would rather have the cross; "I dare say you would," rejoined Lewis. The Duke of Orleans smiled. The King afterwards calling him into his cabinet, said gravely "My nephew, when I say things of that kind, I beg of you not to smile."*

The value of these distinctions is now lost. The admission to the dressing-room of Lewis the Fourteenth often decided the most weighty affairs; created a minister, or disposed of the command of an army. But a King is now obliged to look further for advice; he must in some measure consult the interests and pressing wants of the people he governs; or at the least, he must balance parties, and weigh abilities. Whoever therefore wishes to be profound in the science of etiquette; to know what great officer was entitled to put on a shirt, or hold a napkin for his master; what rights were obtained by sitting in the King's coach; what precedence was due to a Cardinal, and what to a grandee of Spain, must study the history of the court of Lewis the Fourteenth. For my part, I shall conclude this portion of the subject with the remark of Madame de Sévigné, that the deepest metaphysical and theological enquiries, do not so

* *Mém. de Besenval*, t. i.

exhaust and wear out the faculties, as a life spent in the study of these vain distinctions.*

There were many other honours and rewards, however, besides those created by etiquette, which could be conferred by the crown; and, in fact, there is no end to the list of favours which the King took upon him to bestow. Birth, marriage, funeral, succession, every thing was under the eye of the master. He interposed in all the most private concerns of his nobility; he enquired into the means of the old, the happiness of the married, the morals of the young. It must be said to the praise of Lewis, that upon the whole, he seems to have exercised this singular jurisdiction with much good sense, and not unfrequently, good feeling. He reconciled father and son, and often used the weight of his name to compose a domestic quarrel; thinking it both wise and right to appease, by his mediation, any difference that broke out amongst his nobility. For it appeared to him at once weak and dangerous, to encourage disputes which “disturb the service of the crown, create parties, and force the sovereign to undo, for the sake of one, what he had just done at the suggestion of another.”† His conduct in this respect seems to have been the reverse of the dark and disingenuous policy of Catharine de Medicis; and we must allow

* Sévigné, April 6th, 1680. † Œuvres. ii, 191.

it to have been both more prudent and more virtuous. It must likewise be recorded that he conferred a favour with the happiest grace, doubling his gifts by the manner in which he announced them; and that he behaved to all ranks, especially to women, with a politeness which, in a sovereign, is of itself a virtue. Whenever he met a lady, or even a peasant girl, he never failed to take off his hat; and it was generally allowed that, in every circumstance, his manners were those of a perfect gentleman.

But if Lewis exercised his power over his court with urbanity and generosity, he yet took care that it should neither be neglected nor unfelt. If any one, not of a temper to act the part of a servant, omitted to go to court, Lewis debarred him from all promotion in any department of the state, saying, "I do not know him." Nay, even those who were remiss in their attendance, were generally rebuffed when they made any application for favour, with the remark, "He is a man whom I never see."

Depend-
ence of the
Nobles.

Irksome, however, as the duty must have been, the nobility seldom exposed themselves to the reproach of a too sullen independence. Nothing could exceed the humble submission of their manners. Lewis having one day sent a footman to the Duke of Montbazon with a letter, the Duke, who

happened to be at dinner, made the footman take the highest place at his table, and afterwards accompanied him as far as the court-yard, because he came from the King. The nobles, indeed, not only accepted with gratitude the benefits, but even refined upon the omnipotence, of the King. The Chevalier de Courcelle, who was tried and acquitted for a duel, went back to his prison, and refused to quit it till he had the King's permission.* Dangeau tells us of two noblemen who, upon succeeding to their fathers, asked the permission of the King before they would assume the titles which they had inherited. The anonymous commentator of Dangeau, it is true, doubts the truth of this relation, but it is only because such steps were not necessary in law ; a reason equally good for doubting the former fact of an acquitted person remaining in prison.

One or two incidents, however, that happened to Lewis, might have taught him the true value of the praise or approbation of the court. Early in his reign he took a fancy to make verses, and had composed one day a very indifferent madrigal. He showed it to Marshal Grammont, saying at the same time, " Read, I beg of you, this little madrigal, and see if you ever read so absurd a one : because people know that I have lately taken to

Anecdotes.

* Dangeau. Lémontey, 120.

verses, they send me all sorts of things." The Marshal, after reading it, replied, "Your Majesty judges divinely of every thing; this is indeed, the most foolish and ridiculous madrigal I ever read." The King laughed, and said, "Must not the author of it be an absurd coxcomb?" "Sire, he can be nothing else!" "Thank you," said the King, "for having spoken so fairly; I wrote it myself." The Marshal begged to have it back, and declared he had read it hastily; but the King would not allow him, saying, "No, Marshal, the first impressions are always the most natural."*

Many years afterwards another Grammont gave a lesson to the King, with much more credit to himself. Lewis was playing at chess, and had a dispute with his adversary. In order to decide it he called up Count Grammont, who said at once, "Your Majesty is in the wrong." "How?" said the King, "you have not looked at the game." "No," answered Grammont; "but is it not evident, that if there had been the least doubt upon the subject, all these gentlemen standing by, would have given it in your Majesty's favour?"

He received a rebuke of a still more honourable kind from a nobleman who had long been ambassador at Constantinople. Lewis, after making him explain one day the power of the Sultans,

* Sévigné, 22nd Dec. 1664.

could not conceal his wish for such despotism, and let drop some words, implying that these sovereigns must be immensely powerful, “Yes,” said the ambassador, “but I must likewise say, that I have seen three or four of them strangled.”

The dependence of the courtiers was greatly increased by the mode of living prevalent at Versailles. The fashions of the court, during the early part of the reign of Lewis, were expensive and ruinous to the greatest degree. It was common to lose three or four thousand pistoles at play. It is said that Madame de Montespan at one sitting lost four million of livres, equal to more than three hundred thousand pounds.* Men of rank and fortune were not unfrequently seen to pledge their carriages, their horses, their estates, and even their clothes.†

Expensive
habits.

Dress and equipage were likewise heavy burthens upon the courtiers of Lewis; every one vying with his neighbour, in order to appear with splendour before the monarch. With these habits of expense it must not be wondered at, that the highest of the nobility, living at a distance from their estates, and taking no interest in the prosperity of their tenants and labourers, should frequently feel the pressure of poverty, and be obliged to resort to unworthy expedients to keep up the appearance of riches. In

* Sévigné, Dec. 18th, 1678.

† Mém. de Gourville.

Cold policy
of Lewis.

circumstances of embarrassment they always had recourse to the King, and by the most humiliating supplications, endeavoured to recruit their shattered fortunes. Lewis listened with kindness to these petitions, but at the same time put an affected delay, and often an ostentation in his gifts, which rivetted the dependence of the suppliant noble. Not even his dearest friends were able to snatch from him any relief for their distress, till, by long patience and assiduous service, they had shown that their existence hung on the breath of his favour. We have seen that the Duke of la Rochefoucauld was entitled a friend by Lewis himself; we have also seen that La Feuillade carried beyond any man of his day the chivalry of flattery. Yet the Duke of la Rochefoucauld had lived fifteen years in poverty, waiting for the reward of his fidelity, when he was suddenly raised from indigence to wealth; and La Feuillade was for a long time neglected and overlooked. The latter was complaining one day of this treatment to the mother of the Abbé de Choisy, when she replied, "You do not know the King; he is the ablest man in his dominions; he does not choose that his courtiers should give up the pursuit; he makes them sometimes wait a long time, but happy are they whose patience he exercises; he loads them with favours; wait a little, and you will be re-

warded." It happened as she said; La Feuillade obtained a provision far above his deserts. By this artifice, the courtiers of Lewis was kept in continual expectation, and if they found themselves long neglected, they had strong incitements to patience and submission in the persons of the chief flatterer, and dearest private friend of the King. Yet how cold must be the heart of that man who can keep his friend for many years in want, from motives of state policy!

The modes of providing for the servile nobles of the court, were many and various. Men of family who were poor, often received sums of money; others, more in favour, were made governors of provinces and towns. Every place in the government was saleable; the permission to buy one was accounted a reward. Besides all other methods, personal chattels and real estates were often given by the King out of the goods of persons whose property had been confiscated, or of defaulters against whom they had informed. Even Monsieur, the King's brother, was not above receiving a present of this last kind. In short, gifts of all kinds were accepted with gratitude; and during the days of his prosperity, Lewis was courted by all as petitioners for the riches he could dispense. He saw but too well the interested motives of those around him, and he has consigned the dreadful

caution to his son, always to recollect that every one who approached him had an object to gain, an interest in the advice he should give, and a motive for distorting the facts he might relate.

Pride of
the Nobles

With characters so little calculated to excite respect, the nobility of the court of France carried pride as far as any aristocracy in the world. Nothing was so much an object of their horror as a *mesalliance*, or the marriage of one of their noble shoots with a branch of a plebeian family. Count Bussy Rabutin had the inhumanity to carry on a lawsuit for many years to dissolve his daughter's marriage, at the risk of ruining her and bastardizing her issue, merely because she had chosen for her husband one who was not equally noble with himself. Another of these nobles, speaking of a union of this kind, exclaimed, "Better to have ten bastards, than one legitimate child from such a marriage!" Every one has heard probably of the aristocratic reply of Madame de la Meilleraye, to an observation, that a prince who had just died suddenly after a vicious life would scarcely be saved: "I assure you God thinks twice, before he condemns persons of that rank!"*

Before I leave this part of the subject, it may be right to mention that Lewis had a system of pu-

* Dangeau, L. p. 82.

nishments for his nobility, fully as effectual, in its way, as the system of rewards. He exercised a severe inspection over his court. The place of Lieutenant of the Police, which, under former governments, had been no more than a superintendence of the watch and ward of the city of Paris, acquired a totally different character under the direction of Lewis the Fourteenth. La Reynière was the first person who made this office of importance, but d'Argenson raised it much higher, and became in this situation one of the principal ministers of the King. He was the first who introduced *lettres de cachet* into the police; before his time, persons who had committed any disorder were arrested in the form of a legal sentence, which enabled them to obtain their enlargement by an appeal to the Parliament.* The *lettres de cachet*, a term, the meaning of which shall be hereafter explained, seem before this time to have been reserved for state crimes, and issued only by the heads of the government; but by this innovation, all who offended the police, were subjected to arbitrary and indefinite imprisonment. To make this power truly formidable, it was the business of d'Argenson to enquire into the most private concerns of all the principal families of the kingdom. He has been praised by his son for the delicacy

They were
carefully
watched.

* St. Simon, t. 9. Additions, p. 212.

and kindness with which he exercised his duties, and saved the honour of many families; but however exercised, the power is one that ought not to exist in any civilized state. What man worthy of liberty, or indeed what man of spirit and honour, could bear with patience, that his family secrets should be at the disposal of an agent of the police, and then be obliged to express his gratitude that they are not allowed to go further? Besides the reports of d'Argenson however, formed of course on the report of spies and informers, Lewis had many other secret channels through which the opinions, views, and conversation of his courtiers reached him. There were some persons who reported to their friends, without knowing that their relations reached the King, others to Madame de Maintenon, and others to himself. He likewise directed the letters at the post-office to be opened, and extracts to be made of any matter that might interest him; these were regularly laid before him. Thus provided with intelligence, Lewis was enabled to keep his courtiers in continual dread: they discovered, to their dismay, that the most profound external homage was insufficient to obtain the royal smiles, if in their hours of relaxation they by chance indulged in any light observations unfavourable to the divinity of the monarch; and many persons of merit and distinction found them-

selves suddenly stopped in the road of their promotion, and shut out from all posts of honour and of trust, without any conception how they had forfeited the good graces of their sovereign. Often he himself did not recollect the nature of their offence, but upon the person being mentioned for advancement, observed, "I have heard something against him; I do not recollect what it was, but it will be safer to take a man against whom I have not heard any thing." This was the first punishment inflicted on the courtiers; the second was an exile from court: the third, imprisonment in the Bastile. As this last punishment is closely connected with the criminal jurisprudence of the kingdom, I shall reserve it for the same place; at present it will be sufficient to remark, that any one of these penalties might be, and often was inflicted without due enquiry into the case, without examining the accused, and often upon the false information of a meddling gossip, or an envious rival.

We may now, taking all the foregoing circumstances into consideration, form a tolerably correct notion of the French nobility of the age of Lewis the Fourteenth. On the one hand, they were the most polished gentlemen in Europe, the ornaments of a brilliant and witty society, remarkable for refinement of taste in their conversation, their let-

Character
of the nobi-
lity.

ters, and in their judgments upon the literature of the day; the bravest of an army, where all were distinguished for their courage, and the most brilliant at a court, which gave the fashion to Europe. On the other side it must be said, that their military habits made them regardless of laws, and of the wise restraints of civil society; they asked from their superior no liberty, they granted to their inferiors no justice. With little learning, and no knowledge of business, they were only anxious to shine for a moment, and disappear: constantly incurring debts by negligence and extravagance, they relieved themselves by acts of meanness and dishonesty; regardless of the virtue of their wives, they were ever impatient to fight duels in defence of what they termed their honour. With many of the qualities of chivalry, their aim was not to redress wrongs and protect the weak, but to commit injuries with impunity, and act unjustly by privilege. Better a thousand times to have the imagination distorted like Don Quixote, than to have the heart perverted like some of this vain and vicious nobility!

Grammont.

It would be unfair to quote the Count de Grammont as a specimen of the race; yet his example may show what was tolerated, and even admired in the French court. Distinguished by the gifts of high birth, a handsome person, and a ready wit,

he found it convenient and profitable to throw off the restraints of morality, and dispense with the knowledge of religion. He notoriously cheated at play; was a beggar for the King's alms; and yet was always feared and courted in society. When he was dying, his wife, the celebrated Miss Hamilton, a woman of piety and character, was reading the Lord's prayer to him for his edification; "Countess," he said, "let me hear that again, it is a beautiful prayer; who wrote it?"*

From the moral degradation and political abasement of the nobility, sprung consequences of the utmost importance. The strength of society in modern nations, whether free or enslaved, consists in the knitting together of all orders of the state; in their constant union with, and dependence upon each other. But in France, the nobility were not consulted by the King, nor respected by the nation; they were the mere creatures of a court; its instruments in war; its ornaments in peace. The monarch indeed rejoiced in the sway he had obtained over the sons of those who had bearded his father; and even the people saw, with pleasure, the subjection of their petty tyrants; but neither the throne nor the nation were ultimately gainers by the insignificance of the aristocracy. When the people, raised by commerce and agri-

Consequences of the policy of Lewis.

* Dangeau. L. p. 76.

culture to importance, asked for the blessing of a free government, they had no leaders among the great proprietors of the land, to whose honesty and wisdom they could confide their cause: when the sovereign sought for a defence among his nobility against the assault of democracy, he found himself surrounded by a knot of men infatuated with their own birth and privileges; incapable of conducting a government for a day; determined not to make concessions when concession was unavoidable; despised or hated by the people; and totally divested of any quality fit to meet a revolution, but the courage to fight and die. Such were the consequences to his unhappy successor, of the selfish policy of Lewis the Fourteenth.

Versailles
and Marly.

Intimately connected with the influence of Lewis over his courtiers, is the erection of Versailles and Marly. It is said that the day of the barricades, and another day of less public import, but more deeply felt, the day when he lost Madame de la Valliere, were the causes which induced Lewis to transfer his court to the country. But without such peculiar motives, we may easily suppose why the country should, in his eyes, be preferable to Paris. Lewis was fond of air and of the chase. It was well known that he suffered from vapours and head-ache if deprived of exercise, and that he could bear without complaining,

a great degree of heat or cold. Neither does an absolute king gain any thing by confining himself in a town. A private person seeks in a capital the best society, the best theatres, the best news. But the King of France had all these things in his country house: the whole body of nobility; the ministers of state, the best plays and actors of the day. Thus at Fontainebleau, on one occasion, we find four pieces of Corneille, four of Racine, two of Moliere acted at the theatre of the court.*

Whatever were his motives, however, Lewis established his court at St. Germain soon after the death of his mother. But not satisfied with this beautiful situation, he was soon seized with the ruinous passion of building; and having fixed upon Versailles, where his father had a small hunting-seat, he began a palace there before the year 1670. The situation in the middle of the forest, was full of marshes to be drained, of hills to be levelled, and vallies to be raised. For a long time twenty-two thousand men and six thousand horses were employed in working there :† and the troops of the line were ordered to perform this disagreeable and unsuitable service. In 1680 the King transferred his court to the new palace, and in 1683 went to reside there entirely. All his friends

* Sévigné. 30th August, 1675.

† Dangeau, l. 1684.

and favourites, ministers, and ladies of the court, had apartments in the palace.*

Marly was built with the express intention of making a hermitage, where the King might retire for two or three nights at a time, with the few persons necessary for his service. But the love of grandeur got the better of the love of retirement; and the same work of moving ground and cutting rock took place there that had before transformed Versailles. The machine of Marly for raising water to the fountains, has been celebrated over the world as the most prodigious engine ever employed for a useless purpose. "I have seen," says St. Simon, "large trees with their branches and leaves brought from Compiègne and other forests; more than three quarters died, and were immediately replaced by others. I have seen entire avenues disappear in a moment, large masses of thick wood changed into lakes, where I have been rowed in a gondola, and again turned into forests, which made

* It does not appear that all minds were captivated by the tasteless grandeur of Versailles. Madame de Sévigné says, speaking of a hill that had been embellished by a friend of her's, "Si cette montagne était à Versailles, je ne doute point qu'elle n'eût ses parieurs contre les violences dont l'art opprime la pauvre nature." 15th June, 1676. Some one gave Versailles the name of "le favori sans mérite."

a thick shade from the day that they were planted. I have seen basons changed into cascades, waterfalls into still ponds, the dwellings of carps adorned with the finest sculpture and gilding, and, when finished, converted again into bowling-greens; and besides all this, the prodigious machine, with its immense aqueducts, and enormous conduits and reservoirs." To all this, I can add that I have seen Marly, a narrow village confined by a hill on one side and the river on the other, looking upon a large plain of melancholy flatness, and bearing no vestige of having once been the seat of a monarch's magnificence. The whole building, and its accompaniments, have disappeared. Of all the works connected with the royal residences, however, the most gigantic and absurd, was the attempt to bring water to Versailles. As Lewis had committed the blunder of building in a place without water, he proposed to remedy his mistake by conveying the river eight leagues, by a new channel, to adorn his park. To accomplish this, it was necessary to join two mountains at Maintenon, and form an aqueduct. Forty thousand troops were employed in this great work,* and a camp formed expressly for the purpose. From the unhealthiness of the work or of the air, a great mortality ensued; the dead were carried away in

* Sévigné, 13th Dec. 1684.

the night-time that their companions might not be discouraged ; but the loss of many thousand lives to please the wanton caprice of a despot, excited no sympathy, and created no surprise. The war of 1688, however, interrupted the labour, and it was never afterwards resumed.

It was considered as a great favour to be allowed to accompany the King to Fontainebleau or Marly ; and it was a grave fault not to ask for this favour, however little it might be desired. The journies to Fontainebleau were made at fixed times and seasons, and no consideration induced the King to postpone them. The health of his mistresses, of Madame de Maintenon, and his granddaughters, was often seriously affected by undertaking this journey when they were indisposed, but Lewis pretended not to see, or if he saw, not to regard their complaints.*

Manners. We come next to consider the manners of the court of Lewis the Fourteenth. Under a government so despotic as that of the French monarchy, the King has it in his power to give the tone to the manners of the age ; for all the society of high rank being absorbed in that of the sovereign, where his smiles and frowns are rewards and punishments, his example forms a law, which is

* See an anecdote of the Duchess of Burgundy, in St. Simon.

obeyed by all the inferior and provincial societies with as much obedience, as the articles of his civil and criminal code. To direct the morals of the nation, therefore, is a part of the administration of a monarch, placed as Lewis was, at the head of a people with whom admiration is a more powerful motive than fear, and where fashion has a greater influence than the doctrines of philosophy, or even the precepts of religion.

The manners of the court partook of the character of the sovereign, and varied with the ascendancy of his different mistresses. While the Duchess of Orleans and Madame de la Valliere gave the tone to society, nothing was heard of but love and devotion; love, debased by the contaminating atmosphere of a court; and devotion, that seems to have been sought for, either as a relief to, or a retreat from a life of pleasure; either to give variety to the monotony of sensation, or as a decent veil to the approaches of age, and a tacit avowal of an incapacity for vice. With Madame de Montespan came pomp, splendour, rich dresses, and deep play; even the mistress herself, according to her own opinion, was but a part of the King's furniture. "He does not love me," she said, "but he thinks he owes it to his subjects and to his own greatness, to have for his mistress the handsomest woman in his dominions." With Madame de Maintenon

Mistresses.

arrived the reign of propriety and decorum; of misery, dullness, and hypocrisy. Let us take a short survey of each of these periods, and the manners which prevailed during the respective reigns of the three favourites.

Cardinal Mazarin, as the histories of that time relate, introduced the King to the society of his nieces. They were all persons of some talent, and one of them, the Countess of Soissons, has acquired a name notorious indeed, but less desirable than oblivion. Another of the sisters, Maria Mancini, is supposed to have gained a great influence over the heart of the King. The Cardinal seems at first to have looked on this passion with approbation; and one day mentioned it in a jesting way to the Queen-mother, to see how she would answer. But she spoke so strongly of the disgrace of her son's marriage with such a person, even declaring that she would make the kingdom rise both against the King and himself if the event should take place, that he was obliged to change his policy.* From that time he took every step to obstruct the intercourse between his niece and the King; and when negociations for the royal marriage were on foot, he obliged her to retire to a convent. At the separation, Lewis could not restrain his tears, which

Maria
Mancini.
Madlle. de
la Motte.

* Motteville.

drew from the fair one the well known words, "*Vouz pleurez ; vous êtes roi, et je pars.*" " You weep ; you are a king, and I leave you." Her pretensions to the King's affections had been also opposed in a different way, by a successful rival. Mademoiselle de la Motte d'Argencour far exceeded in beauty Maria Mancini, and the King, captivated by her charms, went so far as to offer her an establishment at court. Her mother informed the Cardinal, and promised, if with his consent the proposal should be accepted, to inform him of all that should pass between the King and her daughter. The Cardinal thanked her, and directly told the King all the circumstances he could learn from the mother, pretending that the daughter had disclosed them to more favoured admirers. By this artifice the King was offended, and Mademoiselle la Motte went also to a convent. All other amours being for the time removed, the Cardinal occupied himself with the care of giving a Queen to the Kingdom. By the choice of Maria Theresa, he laid a foundation, first, for the acquisition of Flanders, and afterwards, for the inheritance of the whole Spanish monarchy.

The court spent the winter in the South of France, where the marriage took place. In the spring the King and Queen came to Paris, and the

day of their entry afforded a spectacle both of pomp and pleasure to their subjects. *

The King, however, was not to be satisfied with the possession of a timid and embarrassed wife. The Queen, though a person of some beauty, and deeply in love with the King, led a life of retirement and devotion. Lewis frequented the society of Madame de Soissons, where the most agreeable conversation and polished society were found. His person had at this time a great degree of majesty, his carriage was noble, his look commanding, and it was popularly said, that his appearance alone pointed him out as king. † He excelled at all games and exercises, was graceful on horseback, and appeared with distinction at the tilting matches and tournaments, which were then the fashion of the court. He had a taste for magnificence, gallantry, and gaiety. It is no wonder, therefore, that he did not resist the attractions of the fair sex.

* Among the spectators was Madame de Maintenon, then Madame Scarron, who, describing in a letter the grandeur of the sight, adds, “*La reine dut se coucher hier au soir assez contente du mari qu’elle a choisie.*” The phrase is remarkable enough; how little did she then dream of succeeding Maria Theresa!

† Every one knows the two lines of the *Berenice* of Racine, intended for the King:

*Qu’en quelque obscurité que le sort l’eût fait naître
Le monde en le voyant eût reconnu son maître.*

Indeed for some years he led a life of extreme debauchery; ladies of rank, their maids and attendants, and even peasant girls of the neighbourhood, were the objects of his indiscriminate passion.* But the names of some of his mistresses are of historical importance. Not long after his marriage, he became sensible to the charms of Mademoiselle de la Valliere. He was likewise much struck with the beauty of one of the maids of honour to the Queen; and Mademoiselle de la Motte Houdancourt received with pleasure the attentions of the monarch. But the Duchess of Navailles, who was entrusted with the charge of the maids of honour, refused to allow any facility to these amours. The King was angry: Madame de Navailles offered to give up her charge; and throwing herself at the King's feet, exclaimed, "I beseech you, Sir, seek elsewhere, and not in the Queen's household, which is your own, for the objects of your pleasures and your inclinations; especially as you seem to have already chosen, in the person of Mademoiselle de la Valliere."† The King still persisted; upon which the lady of the

Madlle. de.
la Valliere.

* Mémoires de Madame, p 46.

† This last branch of the sentence is omitted by Anquetil. It certainly takes off somewhat of our notion of the stiff virtue of Madame de Navailles. Madame de Genlis has ingeniously made the story relate to Mademoiselle de la Valliere. The fact is, Madame de Soissons, and the enemies

bed-chamber, hearing that persons had been seen on the roofs, placed bars of iron across all the windows which led to the apartments of the maids of honour. Lewis showed no resentment, but deprived Madame de Navailles of the government of the young ladies, and soon after obliged both her and her husband to leave their offices. They were afterwards restored to favour, but not recalled to court.

Perhaps the first serious passion of Lewis was excited by Mademoiselle de la Valliere. She does not appear to have been exceedingly handsome, and was somewhat lame: a marvellous grace, a peculiar softness and gentleness of character, and above all a most tender and unaffected love for the King, seem to have been her chief attraction. Notwithstanding her passion, she felt great scruple in yielding; and after her seduction, continually lamented and wept over her weakness. When told many years afterwards of the death of the Count de Vermandois, her only son by the King, she exclaimed with anguish, "Must I lament his death before I have yet done lamenting his birth?" Even during the height of her passion, she retired at intervals to the Carmel of Mademoiselle de la Valliere, favoured the King's inclinations for Mademoiselle de la Motte Houdancourt; but according to Madame de Motteville, La Valliere prevailed by yielding sooner.

lites to pray and do penance.* At one time, however, she laid aside her timidity and remorse, brought up publicly her son and daughter by the King, accepted the title of Duchess, and during a journey to Flanders, when the Queen had ordered that no carriage should go before her, Madame de la Valliere crossed the fields and took the precedence. "For my part," said one of the ladies in the Queen's carriage, "God preserve me from being the King's mistress; but if I were unfortunate enough for that, I never should have the effrontery to appear before the Queen." The lady who spoke thus was the Marquise de Montespan, one of the ladies of honour, remarkable both for her beauty and her wit, and a great favourite with her mistress. She usually remained with the Queen in the evening when the King was absent. Not long after the speech just quoted, Lewis got the habit of talking to her when he came to the Queen's apartment, fell in love with her, and after a resistance said to have been obstinate, she became his mistress in all the dignity of that term. She had eight children by the King; the eldest of them was the Duke of Maine, of whom we have had

Madame
de Mon-
tespan.

* Madame de Sévigné speaking of her in her letters, describes her as, "cette petite violette qui se cachoit sous l'herbe, et qui étoit honteuse d'être maitresse, d'être mère, d'être Duchesse; jamais il n'y en aura sur ce moule."

occasion to speak. Her manners were haughty and imperious, her style of conversation caustic and satirical, but remarkable for a peculiar grace and flavour, that belonged only to her sisters and herself, and was called in the world *l'esprit des Mortemar*. She was so much feared by the young courtiers, that walking under the window where she and the King were talking together, was called "going to be shot."* Yet she does not seem to have been malicious in her actions. Madame de la Valliere perceived, with the greatest pain, this new inclination of the King; yet she submitted to adorn with her own hands her proud successor, who cruelly continued to ask it, saying that nobody did it so well. Upon remarking one day the signs of tenderness between Lewis and her rival, this unfortunate victim could not refrain from saying, "when the life I lead at the convent of the Carmelites appears too severe, I will think of the misery these people have made me suffer." But even at the convent she was persecuted by her successful rival, who went to see her, and asked her if she was happy, and if she had any message to send to the brother of Monsieur.† Lewis, with a barbarity it is impossible to excuse, seems also to have enjoyed bringing

* *Passer par les armes.*

† Sévigné. April 26th, 1676.

his mistresses together, and forcing them into the company of the Queen. In the journey which he made in 1670, to show the Queen the conquered towns, this poor princess was obliged to bear the presence of both the mistresses in the same coach with her.

La Valliere at length finally retired, and took the veil; no doubt her life in the convent was happier than her tribulations at court.

The triumph of Madame de Montespan was accompanied by every circumstance of pride and glory. The whole court was at her feet ready to obey her wishes.* When she made a journey, she travelled with ten or twelve men on horseback, and a train of forty-five persons.† When in one of her excursions she passed by Moulins, a splendid boat was prepared for her with gilding, painting, and damask, and adorned with the cyphers of the kingdoms of France and Navarre.‡

The best description of the court of France at this period, is given in a letter of Madame de Sévigné; and, in despair of being able to abridge it without losing the freshness of the colouring, I venture to insert it entire.

* Madame de Sévigné, speaking of a journey of Madame de Montespan, says, "Si elle avoit voulu mener tout ce qu'il y a de dames à la cour elle aurait pu choisir." 6th May, 1676. † Ibid. 15th May. ‡ Ibid. 8th June.

Letter of
Madame de
Séviné.

“ I was on Saturday at Versailles with the Villars. You know the toilette of the Queen, the mass, and the dinner ; but it is not necessary to stifle oneself while their Majesties are at table ; for at three o'clock, the King, the Queen, Monsieur, Madame, Mademoiselle, all the princes and princesses, Madame de Montespan, all her suite, all the courtiers, all the ladies ; in short, what is called the court of France, are in the beautiful apartment of the King, which you know. The whole is admirably furnished ; every thing is magnificent. One does not know what it is to be hot ; and one goes from one place to another without the least crowd. A game of *reversi* gives the form, and fixes the situation of every thing. The King is near Madame de Montespan, who holds the cards ; Monsieur, the Queen, and Madame de Soubise, Dangeau and company, Lauglée and company ; a thousand louis are on the table ; there are no other counters. I saw Dangeau, and I wondered to think how stupid we are at the game in comparison with him. He attends to nothing but his business, and gains where others lose ; he neglects nothing, and profits by every thing ; he is never absent ; in a word, his good management defies fortune, so that two-hundred thousand francs in ten days, a hundred thousand crowns in a month, are entered as received in his book of accounts. He said that I

took part in his play, so that I was very agreeably seated. I saluted the King, as you taught me, and he returned my salute as if I had been young and handsome. The Queen spoke to me of my illness, * * * * *, in short, *tutti quanti*. You know what it is to have a word from every body one meets. Madame de Montespan spoke to me of Bourbon, and asked me to tell her about Vichi. * * * * * Seriously, her beauty is quite surprising; her figure is not half so large as it was, without having lost any thing in her complexion, her eyes, or her lips. She was dressed in *point de France*; her hair in a thousand ringlets; two locks fell down from her temples very low on her cheeks; she had black ribands on her head, the pearls of the *Maréchale de l'Hospital*, set off with locks of hair, and pendants of diamonds of the greatest beauty; three or four pins, no cap; in short, a triumphant beauty for the ambassadors to admire. She knew that people complained that she hindered all France from seeing the King; so she has given him back, as you see; and you would not believe the joy that every body is in, and how beautiful it has made the court. This agreeable confusion, without confusion, consisting of all the best society, lasts from three to six. If couriers arrive, the King retires a moment to read his letters, and then returns. There is always some music that he listens to, and

which has a very good effect. He converses with the ladies who are accustomed to have that honour. There is perpetual talk, and nothing remains upon the mind.—‘How many hearts have you?’—‘I have three, two, one, four;’ then,—‘he has only three, four.’ Dangeau is enchanted with this talk: he discovers the play of others, and draws his conclusions. I was delighted to see his exceeding skill. At six o’clock the King, Madame de Montespan, Monsieur and Madame de Thianges, go out in an open carriage, and the *bonne* d’Heudicourt in the *strapontin*. The Queen is in another with the princesses, and the rest as they please. They go on the canal in gondolas, have music, come back at ten, find a play, twelve o’clock strikes, they have *media nocte*, and so the Saturday is past.

“To tell you how many times I was asked about you; how many questions were put to me without waiting for an answer; how many answers I spared myself; how little they cared, how I cared still less; all this will picture to you the life, the *iniqua corte*. However, it was never so agreeable, and I hope it may continue. * * *

* * * * *

The world has been very unjust about the Brinvilliers; * never were so many crimes so mildly

* The Marquise Brinvilliers was burnt for poisoning her father, brothers, and sister. Penautier, mentioned directly

treated; she has not been tortured; they were so much afraid she should speak, that hopes were given her of a pardon, and so strong that she did not expect to die. she said on mounting the scaffold, '*C'est donc tout de bon?*' 'It is really in earnest then?' At length she is scattered to the winds, and her confessor says she is a saint. Marshal Villeroy said the other day, 'Penautier will be ruined by this affair;' Marshal Grammont answered, 'He must lay down his table:' these are epigrams. I suppose you know it is believed, that there are an hundred thousand crowns distributed to make things easy: innocence is not so prodigal."

It is impossible to give a more lively picture of a court than this letter affords. The mistress and her suite, mentioned immediately after the princes; the game of cards, at which a crafty player makes sure of winning; the tender inquiries, without the smallest grain of sincerity; the state with which Madame de Montespan appears in all the pride and pomp of prostitution; the conversation respecting a woman condemned for poison, supposed to be connected with many persons of rank; the bribes said to be given for betraying the cause of justice; and, in fine, the afterwards, was supposed to be implicated in crimes of the same kind. See the end of this chapter.

* Sévigné, 29th of July, 1676, l. 441.

veil of levity which is thrown over the whole, convey a living image of the court of Lewis the Fourteenth, which it would be in vain to hope to imitate by pages of description.

Madame de
Maintenon.

The overthrow of Madame de Montespan, when at the summit of her glory, by a woman whom she had relieved from want, and loaded with favours, forms properly a part of the historical events of a former period. At present, I shall only describe the character displayed by Madame de Maintenon during her elevation, and the effects she produced on the manners of the court.

After the death of the Queen, the King remained some time at Fontainebleau to comply with decorum, rather than to indulge grief. Madame de Maintenon affected at first to be in deep affliction at the death of her royal mistress, but the King, who was himself very little moved, laughed at her sorrow, and soon consoled her for the loss. Her niece, who relates the anecdote, says, she will not be sure that Madame de Maintenon did not answer the King as the Duke of Grammont did Madame Herault, when he consoled with her in a very melancholy tone on the death of her husband; "Alas!" she said, "the poor man did well to die." "Is that the way you take it, Madame Herault?" answered the Duke,

“then to tell the truth, I don’t care any more than you.”*

The character and views of Madame de Maintenon underwent a great change at this period. For a long time she had suffered from the violence of Madame de Montespan, and in moments of disgust had often spoken of quitting the court. “Madame de Montespan and I,” she writes to her confessor, “have had a very warm conversation. As I am the suffering party, I have wept a great deal; she has given an account of it to the King in her own manner. I own to you, I have great difficulty in remaining in a place, where I am subject every day to such scenes. I have often had a desire to become a nun; the fear of repenting it has made me neglect feelings, that many others would call vocations. For the last seven months I have had the greatest wish to retire. Madame de Montespan represents me to the King as she chooses, and makes me lose his esteem.”† At another time she says, “I never wished more ardently to be away from here.” Yet she adroitly reserves to herself excuses for staying near the King; she reminds her confessor, that he himself had desired her to remain at court; ‡ and explains away, with great plausibility,

* Souvenirs de Caylus.

† Letters, t. i. p. 338.

‡ Letters, t. i. p. 338.

her desire to become a nun.* But when once the victory over Madame de Montespan was gained, the pious widow finds no longer any difficulty in working out her salvation at court; and we hear no more of her persuasion that she cannot serve God in such a place of iniquity. Her whole mind is occupied in governing the King, in converting him to the service of heaven, and receiving from him in return the greatness of the world. Under a sober exterior and a veil of extreme piety, she conceals a fondness for power, and even for the pomps of life, not less lively than that of her predecessor. This mixture of devotion and worldliness is well shown in the following letter to Madame de St. G eran, her intimate friend: "The works of Maintenon are much admired; the presence of the King does not spoil the work: it is a fine sight to see a whole army employed in the embellishment of a park. The two mountains will be joined by forty-seven arcades solidly built: it is by the confession of every one, a work worthy

* "Je me suis mal expliqu e si vous avez compris que je songeois    tre religieuse. Je suis trop vieille pour changer de condition et selon le bien que j'aurai je songerai   m' tablir en pleine tranquillit . Dans le monde tous les retours sont pour Dieu: dans le couvent tous les retours sont pour le monde." Lett. t. i. p. 340. How well expressed! and how ingenious an excuse for a worldly resolution!

of the Romans and of the King. All this leads me often to the reflection, ‘men are mad to give themselves so much pains to embellish a dwelling, where they have only two days to remain.’”* Such was the spirit which she introduced at court; a great love of the world at bottom, varnished over with a few moral or religious sentences, to have the appearance of despising that which occupied the attention and formed the business of life. †

Madame de Maintenon, it is well known, so far subdued the heart of the King, as to induce him to marry her. The marriage, of which there is no doubt, seems to have taken place in 1685 or 6. Not more than four or five persons were present, of whom Harlay, Archbishop of Paris, was one. It is said that Lewis gave a solemn promise to Louvois and Harlay, that he never would declare his marriage; and, that when afterwards, Madame de Maintenon had succeeded by her intreaties in obtaining a counter promise of a declaration,

Marriage of
the King.

* Letters, t. i. p. 403.

† See a letter from a courtier to a lady, in the works of Lewis the Fourteenth, t. 6, p. 518, beginning with complaints of the “néant” of life and the misery of “what are called honours, dignities, and fortune,” and proceeding to a very minute account of the person and mapners of William the Third. In short, a letter of news written by a hermit.

Louvois fell on his knees, and presenting his sword to his sovereign, begged rather to die than see his master incur such disgrace. Lewis, it is said, was stopped by this remonstrance; and when, after the death of Louvois, he resumed his intention, was dissuaded by the advice of Fenelon and Bossuet. In this instance, I think we may say that Madame de Maintenon was more in the right, than the political and spiritual advisers of the monarch. It is impossible to see, in the marriage of Lewis, what St. Simon calls it, "the most profound, the most public, the most lasting, and the most unheard of humiliation."* He had married the first time for the interest of the state, and that object provided for, he might surely be permitted to marry a second time for his own satisfaction, provided only, that the object of his choice was a woman of unblemished reputation. But by concealing his marriage, Lewis in some measure confirmed the opinion of his court. In the world, there are but two motives for keeping a marriage secret: fear of parents and relations, or of public disgrace. Lewis had nothing to apprehend from the first; it may therefore be inferred that he dreaded the second. But let it be observed, that this secrecy destroyed in great part the advantage of the mar-

* "L'humiliation la plus profonde, la plus publique, la plus durable, et la plus inouïe."

riage—the moral example. Lewis remained apparently living with a favourite mistress; for Madame de Maintenon, except on one trifling occasion, never assumed any privileges of rank which had not before been adopted by Madame de Montespan.* She did not leave her arm-chair when the royal family visited her; but neither did Madame de Montespan. She did not follow any of the princesses to the door; but no more did Madame de Montespan. In short, the married life of Lewis was as much a public scandal as his former connexions. He endeavoured to avoid the ridicule of the world by the style and carriage of a man of gallantry; and to save himself at the day of judgment, by producing his certificate of marriage, and the relics he wore under his shirt.

The chief points in the character of Madame de Maintenon were devotion, vanity, and want of feeling. Her devotion, no doubt, was sincere; it took root in her mind, and seems to have been her only resource against that total disgust of life, to which a person of so much talent, and so little feeling, was liable. But she always retained much

Character
of Madame
de Mainte-
non.

* Once, when going into a retired seat at the convent of the Carmelites, the Abbess said to her, that no one entered there but the Queen of France: “Ouvrez, ma mère, ouvrez toujours,” was the reply. Vanity in the house of penance!

of the stain of earth. In a letter to her confessor, after giving an account of her prayers and her reading, she reproaches herself with "very human motives, great vanity;"* and she seems in this instance to have known herself. When her niece came to court, she told her she had refused a place of honour near the person of the Dauphiness, and asked her if she would rather be the person who had obtained it, or her who had refused it. The court, says Madame de Caylus, saw more ostentation than humility in this refusal.† In the same spirit of vanity, when the King died, she could not help exclaiming as she wept, to a nun of St. Cyr, "It is a fine thing to weep for a king."‡

Her want of strong feeling is abundantly shown by the chief events of her life. She did not hesitate, when in the prime of youth and beauty, to accept Scarron for a husband, in spite of his age and his disgusting figure. When established at court by the favour of Madame de Montespan, she found reasons satisfactory to her own mind, for expelling her benefactress and taking her place. When Fenelon, to whom she seems to have been

* Letters, t. i. 347.

† "Cela s'appelle jouir de son refus," is the lively observation of this not over-partial niece.

‡ "Il est beau de pleurer un roi."

greatly attached, was banished in consequence of his controversy with Bossuet, she never interfered in his favour. When the Cardinal de Noailles, whom she greatly esteemed, was ruined in character and fortune by the Jesuits, whom she disliked, she never said a word on his behalf. When Racine, encouraged by her, took a step which threw him into disgrace, she, who was the author of his misfortune, left him to his fate, and he died the victim of her timidity and prudence. Her policy was always directed to one object—to please the King, and maintain herself at court. To effect this purpose she disguised all her tastes, suppressed all her partialities; she even imposed upon herself the rule never to apply in favour of her own relations, who owed their advance entirely to the wish of the ministers to pay their court to her. They were always indignant at the neglect she showed them; one of her nieces, Madame de Villette, afterwards married to Lord Bolingbroke, who never could obtain her interference, said to her one day in a passion, “You wish to have a reputation for moderation, and you make your family the victims of it.” Her own brother, the Count d’Aubigné, received nothing but a blue ribbon, and sums of money from time to time out of the taxes; which gave occasion to his saying to the Marshal de Vivonne, the brother of Madame

de Montespan, "I have taken out my Marshal's staff in money."*

It is a natural question to ask whether Madame de Maintenon was happy. We see so much misery occasioned by an indulgence of passion and feeling, that one is curious to know whether a person who conquered all feelings, who overcame all ties of blood, who resisted the temptations of love, smothered the partialities of friendship, and who rose thereby to a height of fortune that seems almost miraculous, was rewarded by the attainment of happiness. We have it under her own hand that she was not. Some part of her uneasiness, it will be thought, may easily be accounted for. During the early part of her life she had to struggle with rigour; then with poverty; and afterwards with the imperious humour of Madame de Montespan. These portions of her career, it will readily be imagined, were not altogether bright; but was she not happy, it will be said, when the first King of Europe was at her feet, and the court of France paid her homage as their Queen? Alas, no! Of her whole life this part seems to have been the least happy. It is at this time of

* "J'ai eu mon bâton en argent." It was the same brother who, hearing Madame de Maintenon one day express a disgust at life, said to her, "Vous avez donc parole d'épouser Dieu le père."

her life, that her letters are the most full of complaints of the emptiness of grandeur, and the slavery of rank. "What a torment," she said, "to have to amuse a King who is no longer amuseable." "I find in looking back upon my life," she writes to her niece, "that from the age of thirty-two, which was the beginning of my fortune, I have not been a moment without troubles, and that they have always been increasing." * She was one day looking at some carp that had been put into a marble basin in the gardens of Versailles: "These carp are like me," she said, "they regret their mud." †

Voltaire has said, that the mistresses of Lewis the Fourteenth had scarcely any influence over the public acts of the reign. With respect to Madame de Montespan, we have the evidence of Madame de Maintenon: "that she knew all the secrets of the state, and gave very good, or very bad advice, according to her passions." ‡ With respect to Madame de Maintenon herself, we have every reason to suppose that she exercised a very great influence in all the patronage of the state,

Influence
of the mis-
tresses.

* Lettres de Maintenon, t. iii. p. 170.

† Vie de Maintenon.

‡ "Elle savoit tous les secrets de l'état, et donnoit de très bons conseils et de très mauvais, selon ses passions." Lettres de Maintenon, iii. p. 283.

even in the command of armies. Catinat, it is well known, was deprived of a command in which he distinguished himself, because she thought him remiss in religious duties. The celebrated Massillon says in his memoirs ; “ Madame de Maintenon was the only person who had a powerful influence with the King. She had great talents, but at the same time all the faults of a woman jealous of her power. She had a minute knowledge of all business. She had an influence even in the choice of ministers.” *

The manner in which Lewis transacted business, is a proof of her influence. The minister came to her room, where he made his report to Lewis, while Madame de Maintenon sate in another part working or reading. Now and then the King turned round to her, and asked her her opinion. It is even said, that the whole portfolio of the minister was arranged before-hand with the clandestine Queen. Sometimes indeed the King took a pleasure in contradicting her wishes, and refusing to name the person she desired to promote. But

* “ Madame de Maintenon étoit la seule personne qui eût un credit puissant auprès du Roi. Elle avoit beaucoup d’esprit, mais en même temps tous les défauts d’une femme jalouse de son influence. Elle avoit une connoissance détaillée de toutes les affaires. Elle influoit même sur le choix des ministres.” Mém. de Massillon.

he did the same thing with his ministers. Old Le Tellier said, that after agreeing to nineteen appointments, he would often refuse the twentieth, to show he was not led. This was called by the old minister, taking his *bisque*. To return to the influence of Madame de Maintenon: what seems to put the question beyond all doubt, is the account given by herself. Speaking of these councils, she says, “when I was not wanted, which happened very seldom.”* Now it is clear, she could be wanted for no other purpose than to give her advice. It is said that when her opinion was required, the King, turning round to her, used to ask, “*Qu'en pense votre solidité?*” “What does your solidity say?”

The deference of this great King, to a lady older than himself, who held no ostensible situation, exposed him to the laughter of the world; and William the Third, at the time when Barbesieux, the dissipated son of Louvois, was secretary of state, said with some humour, that most kings chose old ministers and young mistresses, but that Lewis had chosen a young minister and an old mistress.†

* Entretiens. Lettres de Maintenon, t. iii.

† Burnet, Hist. of his Own Time. Montesquieu has the same observation in his *Lettres Persanes*. Duclos tells the story differently. Madame Cornuel made the same obser-

It was not from his enemies alone, however, that sarcasms and jests proceeded. The Duchess of Burgundy, the favourite both of the monarch and the mistress, said to them one day, hearing them praise the government of Queen Anne, "*Ma tante* (addressing Madame de Maintenon by the title she always gave her), one must allow that queens govern better than kings; and do you know why, *ma tante*? It is because under kings women govern, and under queens men govern."* It is to the credit of Lewis and Madame de Maintenon, that neither of them was offended by this sally.

The character of Madame de Maintenon was attacked by nearly all parties; by the friends of the Dauphin, and of the Duke of Orleans; by the Jansenists, the Protestants, and finally by the whole nation, at the time when the arms of France were unsuccessful, and loyalty sought for a scape-goat near the King, that might bear his sins away from his sacred person. It may be said in her favour, that as the wife and widow of Scarron, she seems

vation with her usual felicity of expression. Having gone to Versailles soon after the appointment of Seignelai and Torcy, she was asked on her return what she had seen at court: "*J'ai vu à la cour,*" she replied, "*ce que je n'eusse jamais cru y voir, c'est l'amour au tombeau et le ministère au berceau.*" *Mém. de Madame*, p. 294.

* St. Simon.

to have obtained general esteem; that her reputation was very little attacked, even by scandal, in an age when beauty, youth, poverty, and chastity, were seldom found in the same woman; that she remembered, with the exception of those of Madame de Montespan, the benefits she had received in the days of her distress; that she was incapable of rancour; and that she endeavoured, in a difficult situation, to perform what she thought her duty. On the other hand it must be said, that she had no passion for good, any more than for evil: that she supplanted her benefactress; that she had no moral courage; that she lost many opportunities of doing essential benefit; and converted a great King, soiled with human vices, into a bigoted monk without any virtues.

The three chief mistresses of Lewis were suited to the time of life at which they were chosen. Madame de la Valliere had beauty and tenderness to captivate his youth; Madame de Montespan had beauty and wit to attract his middle age; Madame de Maintenon had the remains of beauty, with great talent, great insinuation, great devotion, great powers of pleasing, to charm and occupy the mind in his declining age. She formed a repose, to which he gladly retired from the fatigues of stormy passion, and the caprices of imperious ambition.

Manners. The manners of the court varied, as I have said, with the ascendancy of these different mistresses. The licentiousness that prevailed at the beginning of the reign, will be better described by two or three anecdotes, than by any quantity of declamation or of reasoning.

Anecdotes. A child of Mademoiselle de Fouilloux, maid of honour to the Duchess of Orleans, was brought up publicly by Madame d'Armagnac with her own children.* The Chevalier de Lorraine, who was the father of this child, went one day to the mother, and said, "Mademoiselle, what is the matter with you? Why are you melancholy? What is there extraordinary in all that has happened to us? We loved one another; we do so no longer; constancy is not a virtue of our age: it is much better that we should forget the past, and resume our ordinary manner. What a pretty little dog you have got; who gave it you?"†

From the same excellent authority we have another story illustrative of manners. Madame de R. and Madame de B. quarrelled at play about a sum of twelve pistoles; Madame de B. at length tired of disputing, yielded. "Ah, Madame," said the other, "that is well for you, who have lovers

* Sévigné, 30th March, 1672.

† Sévigné, 1st April, 1672. Madame de Sévigné only adds, "et voilà le dénouement de cette belle passion."

that give you money." "Madame," said Madame de B. "I am not obliged to explain to you how that matter is, but I well know that when I entered the world ten years ago, you were giving money to yours."*

Another anecdote will speak for the morals of the men. A gentleman well known at court, of the name of Villarceaux, when speaking to the King of another subject, took occasion to say, that there were persons who told his niece (Madame de Grancéi), that his Majesty had designs upon her; that if it were so, he begged him to make use of him; that the affair would be safe in his hands, and he would answer for success. The King laughed, and turned it off with a joke.† In those days any conduct was tolerated in society. Every one knows that the celebrated Ninon de l'Enclos, who was never married, lived for several years with Villarceaux at his house; that she had many children by different lovers, and that the paternity of one of these being disputed between two gentleman, was decided by throwing lots. There is nothing singular in this career; what is extraordinary is, that Ninon de l'Enclos was the bosom friend of Madame de Maintenon, and the admiration of all Paris.

* Sévigné, 2nd Nov. 1673. † Ibid. 23d Dec. 1671.

Devotion.

The lives of the French ladies at this time were divided between two passions, love and devotion. Those who were abandoned by their lovers, or by youth, found a resource in pretending to an exaggerated devotion. This devotion, be it observed, did not consist in paying attention to the exercises of religion, and fulfilling at the same time the duties it enjoins, but was made up of passionate repentance, floods of tears, ostentatious retirement, singular dress, and loud professions of superior sanctity. The persons who took this turn, were always careful to let their religious superiority be known. One day a servant offering a glass of *liqueur* to a lady of this class, she turned to her neighbour and said, "what does he offer it me for? does not he know I am devout?" The princess of Harcourt proclaimed her conversion by leaving off *rouge* at court. Becoming afterwards a lady of the bed-chamber, she began to repent of her hard penance, and said she would put on her *rouge* again if the King, or her husband, commanded it. "Bets are offered," says Madame de Sévigné, "that the Princess d'Harcourt will not be a devotee in a year's time, now that she is lady of the bed-chamber, and that she will put on her *rouge* again; for this *rouge* is the law and the prophets; upon this *rouge* all christianity turns."*

* Sévigné, 5th Jan. 1674.

Such was the devotion of ostentation. Another kind was that of tenderness. Madame de la Valliere was one of those who found the benefit of this species of religion; for there can be little doubt that the last hold she possessed of the heart of the King, was the interest she excited by her retirement. When she first went to a convent, she sent the King a message, “that she would sooner have quitted the court, *after having lost the honour of his good graces*, if she could have obtained of herself not to see him any more; that this weakness had so prevailed in her, that she was hardly able to sacrifice it to God; that nevertheless, she wished the remainder of the passion she had entertained for him, to serve her as penance, and that after having given all her youth to him, she thought the rest of her life was not too much to devote to the care of her salvation.”* The King wept, the fair penitent returned, and in a few days after was better established at court than she had been for a long time.† Madame de Montespan, however, obtained the pre-eminence, and the deserted mistress was obliged again to have recourse to devotion, to fill the vacancy of a heart that was too tender to allow her to be happy without passion. This species of devotion, was perhaps the most common of all.

* Sévigné, 12th Feb. 1671. † Ibid. Feb. 27th, 1671.

Another kind remains to be mentioned, namely, the devotion of ambition. Such was that of Madame de Longueville; who, after playing a conspicuous part in the war of the Fronde, was obliged when peace was made, and her lovers had abandoned her, to seek for some other sort of occupation. At one time she attempted the part of a *bel-esprit*, and was at the head of one of two parties, that were divided on the merits of a couple of sonnets. Finding this would not suffice, she fell into extreme devotion, and became a very considerable person in the Jansenist party. It was chiefly by her means that the papal ordinance, known by the name of the peace of Clement the Ninth, was obtained; and during the latter part of her life, the celebrated Arnauld owed his safety to her powerful protection.*

In this manner passed the early years of the reign of Lewis. Nearly every woman who was

* This celebrated woman had been in early life any thing but over scrupulous, as the histories of the time relate. Being once in Normandy with her husband, those about her saw that she was overcome with ennui: they proposed to her a hunting party, "No, I do not like hunting." Work? "No, I do not like work." Walking or play? "No, I do not like either." Then what would you have? "What can I say? I do not like innocent pleasures." Mem. de Madame, p. 104.

young and handsome, occupied the years of her youth and beauty in intrigue. La Rochefoucauld has observed maliciously, that though he had known some few who past through life without reproach, he had never seen any who, having once yielded to temptation, had confined themselves to a single lover. The declining age of these ladies was spent in the transports of repentance; and when admirers no longer crowded the door with the tribute of their homage and protestations, the aid of a spiritual director was called in to overcome passions which had ceased to please, and atone by rigour for an indulgence in sin which had become wearisome or impossible. When the King became himself devout, however, and Madame de Maintenon governed the court with the spirit of a convent, it became the fashion of the frivolous, and the flattery of the interested, to assume an exterior of piety, even in their younger days, and to treat the world, which in fact they adored, with an affected contempt. The places of worship were crowded with courtiers and women of fashion. "Ladies who appeared the furthest from it," said Madame de Maintenon, with triumphant joy, "never leave the church." An air of sobriety and puritanical decorum, pervaded the scenes where Madame de Montespan had established the empire of gaiety and dissipation. Yet this appearance was

Hypocrisy.

hollow and deceitful, as a single instance will prove. The King's chapel was usually crowded long before he appeared. One day Brissac, Major of the guard, entered the chapel a short time before the arrival of Lewis, and marched out his men, saying loud enough to be heard, "The King does not come to-day;" instantly the whole chapel was deserted. In a few minutes the officer of the guard marched back his men. When the King entered, he was much surprised at the thinness of the audience, and the officer was obliged to tell him what he had done. The name of the Marquise de Dangeau deserves to be recorded as one of three or four who remained when the King was not expected.

The hypocrisy of the court even extended to the choice of a confessor. Most of the persons about the person of Lewis, chose a Jesuit for their confessor, in order to conform to the predilection of the monarch. But when they were at the point of death, these same persons, no longer able to dissemble their dislike to the Jesuits, sent for a father of the Oratory, or some other order, or from the secular clergy, to give them their last communion. The Duchess of Burgundy, Henri Jules de Bourbon Condé, the Princess Louisa Maria Stuart, daughter of James the Second, and the Queen of Spain, first wife of Philip the Fifth, were among

the most illustrious of these dissemblers. It was for this reason that Harlai, the Chancellor, having some Jesuits and some fathers of the Oratory in his room at the same time, said to the first, "Fathers, one must live with you;" then turning to the others, "and die with you, fathers."

A crime of a very deep dye prevailed at Paris Poisoning. during this reign, and proved that the ferocity nourished by the civil wars of past ages, was not yet entirely subsided. The Marquis of Brinvilliers lodged in his house a young officer of the name of Sainte Croix. His wife, struck by the handsome figure of this young man, advised her husband not to let him remain in the house; he neglected her warning, and the loss of her virtue was the consequence. Her father, D'Aubrai, civil lieutenant of Paris, discovering the intrigue, procured a *lettre de cachet*, and caused the young officer to be confined in the Bastille. Here he became acquainted with Exili, an Italian, who, after spending all he had in a search after the philosopher's stone, had adopted the horrible trade of selling poison; had been discovered, and imprisoned. Instructed by this man, Sainte Croix communicated his knowledge to the Marchioness of Brinvilliers, who with infernal malignity made use of it to destroy by poison her father, her two brothers, and her sister. Yet this woman pretended to religion; went through the

forms of piety, and often practised confession. When she was taken, a general confession, written in her own hand, was found upon her. She was burnt in 1676.

In the mean time this horrible crime spread more and more in Paris. Exili had been imprisoned upon the information derived from persons who had revealed their dealings with him in confession, and it was not possible to produce their evidence upon a trial. For such is the singular nature of confession, that the Government is allowed to know of the crime, but not to convict the criminal. Exili, from his prison, continued to make proselytes to his system of poisoning, and the King was obliged to create a tribunal of enquiry, called the *chambre ardente*. But the crime had infested Paris from the year 1670, and this court was not instituted till the year 1680. The Duchess of Bouillon and the Countess of Soissons, both nieces of Cardinal Mazarin, were cited to appear before it: the Duchess of Bouillon had been guilty only of consulting some pretended astrologers and fortune-tellers upon her destiny; or, at most, had been indulged with a sight of the devil; one of the common tricks of these impostors. One of the presidents of the chamber, named La Reynie, asked her with much gravity if she had seen the devil; she answered that she saw him at that mo-

ment; that he was very ugly and ill-looking, and that he was disguised as a counsellor of state. The imprudent president was confounded, and drew in his horns. The Countess of Soissons was not so triumphant as her sister. Being accused of having bought some of the poison, called by the dealers *succession powder*, she preferred retiring to Brussels, to the risk or embarrassment of a trial. The imputation pursued her, however, during the rest of her life. The Queen of Spain, who died in 1689, was said to be poisoned by her means.

Among the persons accused, the most illustrious and least suspected, was Francis de Montmorenci Bouteville, Duke of Luxembourg, a marshal in the French armies, and one of the most distinguished of the peers of France. The miserable gang who dealt in poison and prophecy, alleged that he had sold himself to the devil, and that a young girl of the name of Dupin had been poisoned by his means. Among other stories, they said he had made a contract with the devil, in order to marry his son to the daughter of the Marquis of Louvois. To this atrocious and absurd accusation, the Marshal, who had surrendered himself at the Bastille on the first reports against him, replied with the mingled sentiment of pride and innocence, "When Matthieu de Montmorenci married the widow of Louis le Gros, he did not have recourse

to the devil, but to the States-General, who declared that this marriage was necessary, in order to obtain for the minor king, the support of the house of Montmorenci." This brave man was imprisoned in a cell six feet and a half long; and his trial, which was interrupted for several weeks, lasted altogether fourteen months. No judgment was pronounced; and the Marshal, after a few days retirement, resumed his functions at court, where Lewis received him without speaking of what had happened. Such were the manners, and such the justice of the old monarchy of France! *

* In this Chapter I have not hesitated to expose the vices of the French court, as I conceive that, however disgusting, nothing is more useful than such an exposure, both in a political and moral view of the history of mankind. But I have entirely omitted the details of many habits of Lewis the Fourteenth and his family, which can serve no useful purpose, and are too indelicate for the perusal of the humblest class of English readers.

CHAPTER III.

Administration of Lewis. The Army. The Navy. Roads. Buildings. The Canal of Languedoc. Colbert. The Finances. Legislation. Administration of Justice. The Bastille. State of the People. General Review of the Government of Lewis.

IT is now time to leave the court and the nobility, and to examine what use Lewis made of the absolute power which he possessed in governing the kingdom at large. Let us take a short review, first, of his administration of the executive authority; secondly, of his exercise of the power of imposing taxes and making laws; and, thirdly, of judicial acts.

With respect to the military force, all his regulations were framed with a view to concentrate power in the hands of his minister of war. For this purpose he abolished the office of Constable, and after the death of the Duke d'Épernon, that of Colonel General of the Infantry. Before his time, generals at the head of armies used to give

The Army.

promotion to officers who distinguished themselves on the field of battle; to bestow the command of the smaller divisions of the army on whom they pleased; and to entrust detachments sent on any particular enterprize, to such of their generals or colonels as they thought most likely to succeed. But by the military ordinances of Lewis, all promotion was reserved to the King himself; the army was divided into brigades, commanded by officers appointed under the name of brigadiers; and all detachments were ordered to be given to the officers, according to a fixed rule of seniority. These regulations were greatly censured by some, as tying up the hands of a Commander-in-chief, and fettering the discretion proper to be exercised by a general in the field.* On the other hand, what was lost on particular occasions, was gained in general habits of order and discipline; and by bringing all parts of the system under one head was acquired the advantage of unity, which is of more importance in the government of an army, than in the conduct of any other institution. Other regulations of Lewis were of less doubtful utility. He gave a uniform to his troops, dress having hitherto been a matter left to the choice of individuals. He introduced bayonets into general use;

* Vide St. Simon.

he separated the grenadiers, and formed them into a company for each regiment ; he founded schools of artillery, and brought that arm to a perfection before unknown ; he introduced regular discipline and exercise in all parts of his army, both in peace and war. Let us add to this, that he was the patron of Vauban, who gave a new face to the art of fortification ; and who, under his directions, created that triple barrier, which so long employed Marlborough, and remained during all the last century the protection of France.

I will not quote it to his praise, that he formed thirty regiments of militia. They were chosen by ballot, and he did not permit those who were drawn to find a substitute for money ; a cruel oppression upon the people of the country, on whom the burthen chiefly fell.

The regular army was prodigiously increased in numbers by Lewis. In 1672, he had already one hundred and eighty thousand regular troops, and during his last wars he had four hundred and fifty thousand men under arms, including the troops of the marine.* But, while Lewis greatly improved, as well as augmented, his military force by diligence and industry, it must be owned upon the other hand, that he interfered too much with their action in the field. Louvois, who had the merit of

* Siècle de Louis XIV.

the exact discipline, the complete appointments, and the regular provisioning of the army, had, like his master, the defect of wishing to govern them during their campaigns. While Turenne lived, his established reputation greatly checked this propensity, but when he was no more, Louvois took upon him the authority of general-in-chief, as well as that of minister of war. Lewis himself was delighted with this species of power; and after the death of Louvois, he continued to the day of his death writing his own dispatches to his generals in the field. In one of these, he seems to think it a compliment to Marshal Luxembourg, to tell him, that he found they generally agreed in opinion.* Without being endowed either with the capacity or the inclination to go through the fatigues of a campaign, he appears to have imagined that he could dictate from Versailles all the movements and operations of his armies. It was unfortunate for the success of his arms, that a courier could, in a few days, go from his cabinet to the most distant of the head-quarters of his generals; and had the sea intervened between him and his marshals, it would clearly have been much to the advantage of his glory. The only way in which his commanders could prevent the mischief thus caused, was by persuading him that their plans were of his own

* Œuvres de Louis XIV.

suggestion, and thus obviating his interference; but, in many cases, his previous decisions had a fatal effect. A remarkable instance of this occurred at Turin, where the French army were obliged to wait in a disadvantageous position, in which they were defeated, because Lewis and Chamillard had decided before the campaign opened, that the general in Piedmont should not be the first to attack.

When we consider the discipline, spirit, and numbers of the French army, during this reign, it seems astonishing they should not have accomplished more than they did; especially if we reflect that England was for a long time the accomplice of Lewis; Spain, broken and enfeebled; Holland relaxed in her military discipline; and the Emperor distracted by the wars with Turkey and his Hungarian subjects. Seeing these circumstances, I am much inclined to think that it was the imperfect meddling generalship of Lewis, which prevented him in the days of his glory from conquering Europe. In like manner during his decline, the same interference afforded some compensation to Marlborough, for the obstacles thrown in his way by the Dutch deputies.

The object next in importance to the army, in The Navy. the eyes of Lewis, was his navy; and, as the military force was entrusted to the talents of Louvois,

the marine was confided to the industry and abilities of Colbert. The success of Colbert's efforts was, during his life, equal to that of his colleague and rival. In the year 1660, a very few ships, which, neglected by Mazarin, lay rotting in the ports, formed the entire navy of France. When Lewis joined his forces to those of Holland, in his first war, the whole naval strength that could be dispatched to combine with the Dutch squadron, consisted of a single fire-ship, the only fleet that he possessed being absent on a distant expedition. In the year 1666, to the surprise of both friends and enemies, thirty-six ships of war and fifteen fire-ships appeared in the Mediterranean; fourteen ships of war and five fire-ships in the Atlantic. In 1672, he possessed sixty ships of the line and forty frigates. In 1681, his navy consisted of one hundred and ninety-eight ships of war, including tenders; and thirty gallies were armed, or ready to be fitted out at Toulon. The number of men enrolled for different classes of naval service, consisted of one hundred and sixty-six thousand; eleven thousand regular troops were employed on board the ships; a thousand of the nobles or gentry served, or were learning to serve, in the sea service. In 1681 d'Estrées was made a marshal, being the first naval officer who ever held that rank in France.

Such was the state of the navy when Colbert died ; and the conduct of the officers and seamen in the actions in which they were engaged, did not disappoint the anxiety of the minister and the hopes of the monarch. But the fatal battle of La Hogue, in 1692, damped the spirits still more than it diminished the force of the marine ; and nearly a century elapsed before the navy of France became again formidable to England.

The attention of Colbert was likewise turned to the state of the ports. He made arsenals at Brest, Toulon, Dunkirk, and Havre de Grace. As France was in want of ports on the coast of the Channel, and of the Ocean, he built a port, town, and arsenal at Rochefort.

In his improvements of the interior of his kingdom, Lewis, and his minister Colbert, showed a great portion of their usual activity. New roads were made, and the plans laid down for those large, but somewhat ostentatious, causeways that intersect France. Among the useful works of Lewis, must likewise be reckoned, the improvement of the police of Paris ; a town utterly void, when he came to the throne, of all the comforts now thought essential to a great capital. He provided for the cleaning of the streets, caused them to be lighted by five thousand lanthorns, and established a guard or watch for the safety of the inhabitants.

Interior
Improvements.

In 1667, a magistrate was appointed by himself, charged with this function. Yet it must not escape an unprejudiced observer, that in taking the direction of the police, Lewis added one more to the arbitrary powers which he exercised: neither can it now be admitted that the paving of the streets, which he caused to be made, is so good, that "there is no town paved like Paris."* The pavement, even and well-made as it is for carriages, has no flag-stones for the convenience of those on foot, who, to this day, still continue to fatigue their feet, and expose their lives, the victims of a government which paved only for the aristocracy.

Buildings.

It may be supposed, that if Lewis improved his country in a useful manner, he did much more to foster those arts that are merely ornamental. But nearly every thing great of this kind is to be attributed to Colbert, who suggested some plans that were executed, and others that were neglected. In 1664, Colbert was appointed director of the public buildings, an office which properly implies the direction of the fine arts. Bernini was sent for from Rome, and received magnificent rewards for some plans for completing the Louvre, which were never executed.

* Voltaire. It may have been quite true in his time.

During his stay, however, was executed that magnificent front of which the design was given by Perrault, and which to this day makes the Louvre an object of general admiration. The Arch of St. Denis, and the Hospital of the Invalids, are the chief of the other monuments of architecture, by which Paris can recal the memory of Lewis the Fourteenth.

To Colbert, France is indebted for one of her noblest public works, the canal which joins the Mediterranean and the Ocean. He adopted and executed a project, first broached during the reign of Francis the First, and renewed under that of Henry the Fourth. Much discussion has taken place on the question to whom is due the credit of the execution; but be that as it may, it is impossible to deprive Colbert of the glory of having undertaken the work, and appropriated funds for its completion. The canal, known by the name of the Canal of Languedoc, is forty-six leagues in length, thirty feet in breadth, and has a hundred and four sluices. The waters are collected in a bason on the summit of one of the lowest of a chain of mountains, and flow from thence on each side to the sea. In eleven days merchandize could be conveyed from one sea to the other.

The Canal
of Languedoc.

By the judicious advice of Colbert, Lewis diminished the number of convents, and suppressed

seventeen holidays. This last measure was of itself a prodigious benefit to the industry of France.

Colbert, with some partiality for the marine, which was his own department, valued the importance of the different branches of the public service, in the following order: navy, foreign affairs, army, civil list. It is much to his credit that he puts the expenses of the King in the last place; it is likewise to his honour, that he opposed the extravagant follies of Lewis. He had the boldness to tell him, that kings who do not acquire fame in war, are measured by their buildings; that he hoped Lewis would not be measured by Versailles; and that it would have been much more to his glory to have finished the Louvre.

A separate chapter would be required to treat of the value of the encouragement given by Lewis, under the direction of Colbert, to sciences, letters, and the fine arts. Let it here only be recalled to mind, that he established an academy of sciences; that he distributed more than one hundred thousand francs yearly, by order of his master, to men of letters, both in France and in foreign countries; and that he established an academy at Rome, where the art of painting was better learned than it could possibly be in France.

The next great question which we have to

explain, is how money was procured for the vast Finances. and ostentatious machinery of the government; to supply the demands of war abroad and corruption at home; the equipment and maintenance of an immense army; the formation and furnishing so many fortresses; in short, all the expenditure necessary for the maintenance of great power, together with all that which is caused by the frivolity of a luxurious and profuse court. The examination of this question brings us immediately to the plans of Colbert, who for twenty years ruled over the finances, and made his name equal in fame to that of his master. To have some idea of the task undertaken by Colbert, it is necessary to state shortly, the previous situation of the finances and commerce of the kingdom.

In 1660, the people paid about ninety millions of livres (at twenty-seven livres the marc, or about seven millions five hundred thousand pounds sterling) in taxes. Of this sum, not more than thirty-five millions were applicable to the service of the state, fifty-five millions being swallowed up by debts and perpetual charges. Since 1621, there had been created twenty-five millions of annual interest of stock, besides an enormous mass of paper, issued for the compensation of offices and alienations abolished. These operations had been so ill conducted, that speculators bought stock at a State of the
Finances
before
Colbert.

low price, and obtained from the government nearly the value at which it had at first been created. Others parted with their stock to the treasury at the market-price, but obtained new loans on the terms of paying only two-thirds of the sum stipulated, and receiving fifteen per cent. interest.* Then followed new loans to discharge the former, at twenty and twenty-five per cent. interest. Every branch of the revenue was mortgaged in perpetuity. It was in vain that the duties of excise and commerce had been augmented sixty per cent. since 1633; the revenue under these heads had diminished. In the same way, and for the same reason, the *tailles*, which had been raised to fifty-seven millions, did not bring so much money to the treasury as before 1620, when they were only eighteen or twenty millions.† This was partly owing to the inability of the people to pay, and partly to the extortion of the receivers, in whose favour a new tax had been laid on, by way of perquisite to them, which was always collected before any other.‡ Levies by distress, surcharges, im-

* It is inconceivable that the government should not have thought of going into the market itself to buy stock at the current price. But when the master does not look on, the steward makes his harvest.

† Forbonnais. *Recherches et Considérations sur les Finances de France*, t. ii. p. 127.

‡ *Ibid.*

prisonments, poverty, abandonment of culture, were the consequences of these dreadful burthens.

Another great fault in the administration, was the number of offices in the departments of finance and justice. By an official account given to Colbert in 1664, it appeared that the number of places in these two departments was upwards of forty-five thousand, of which the salaries amounted to more than eight millions of livres. These offices were all sold, and the money produced by the sale was part of the revenue. Each of these offices carried with it an exemption from taxes; each new creation, therefore, diminished the permanent resources of the state. The current price of the whole of these offices, at that time, amounted altogether to four hundred and nineteen millions, or about thirty-four millions sterling. *

Offices.

The internal commerce of the country was not only embarrassed, but nearly destroyed by the duties, which were levied in fifty different shapes on the transit of commodities from one province to another. The provinces in which states were held had a right to impose their own taxes, and were therefore free from those which were levied upon the kingdom in general. † Hence not only were

Internal
Commerce.

* Forb. t. ii.

† See the list of the provinces esteemed foreign. Ibid. t. ii. p. 304.

they considered as foreign countries in respect to the kingdom in general, but so many and so various were the duties in different parts of France, that trade could with difficulty escape from the intricacy of the folds in which it was entangled. Thus in Provence there were fourteen kinds of duty peculiar to that part of the kingdom, besides other general taxes. In going down the Loire, merchandize paid duty no less than twenty-eight times between St. Rambord and Nantes, besides some other payments; and merchants, at length, preferred land carriage, as much cheaper than the use of the river.

In a memoir addressed to Cardinal Mazarin, it is asserted, that before 1660,† a ball of silk from the Levant paid only sixteen livres; that, from that time, it paid more than a hundred and twelve livres, before it could be employed in manufactures. The author avers, that the customs of Valence were paid three times; once by a ball of silk coming from Italy to Lyons; again in going from Lyons to Mantua to be wrought; and again in coming from Mantua to Lyons, to be manu-

* These imposts still subsisted in 1755.

† Forbonnais says, the memoir was presented in 1659. One or other of these dates must be wrong, and evidently the one in the text. The year intended, is perhaps 1650. t. ii. p. 143.

factured. Besides this, there were other duties at Lyons itself. It is likewise stated, that the importations of silk had diminished from twenty thousand to three thousand balls a year. These balls were of one hundred and sixty pounds weight each. Such were the impediments to internal trade and manufactures.

On the subject of the manufactures and foreign commerce of France at this time, there is preserved a very important remonstrance, made to the King by the six companies or guilds of trades of Paris, with relation to the new taxes, imposed by the declaration of 1654. They represent, that, by the declaration of 1654, a new duty was imposed on the entry of all foreign manufactures, as well as a duty of twenty-four livres on the marc of gold, and four livres on the marc of silver. They affirm, that these new taxes, "instead of advantage, will produce a loss, experience having shown that excessive imposts have never augmented the revenue of your Majesty; but make a loss on the gross of what is gained in the detail, because trade in general diminishes, when the sums levied on each particular article are augmented; and the increase of commerce is more beneficial than any augmentation of duties, not only to individuals, but to the public; because, by means of commerce, the riches of individuals increasing, flow through many chan-

Manufac-
tures.

nels into the King's coffers." In support of this reasoning, the authors affirm that the farmers of the great duties have always a clause to enable them to dissolve their contract if new taxes shall be imposed; and that in the instance of gold, although the regular duty was twenty-eight sous a marc, the farmers only levied twenty-one, in order to bring into the country a greater quantity.* The gold thus brought into France, being worked into gold thread for lace and ribands, was sent to Spain and the Indies; the profit of the manufacture to the country being such that the raw gold was worth eight crowns, and the worked twenty. They proceed to complain, that the duties on the most necessary articles, *viz.* the raw material, were the most raised; so that some goods paid twenty-five, some fifty, and some more than an hundred per cent. The prohibitions of English goods, by a declaration of 1648, had entirely ruined the commerce with England in wine, which had been in its turn prohibited in England. Among the goods which the French exported, we find enumerated in this document, the linens, serges, and bombazeens of Lyons; fustians, stockings of silk, worsted, cotton, thread, and goats' hair, all kinds of caps and mil-

* The farmers of the five great duties, were the farmers of the customs, which chiefly consisted in the duties so called.

linery sent to Spain, Italy, and South America; all kinds of furs and hardware; knives and scissors; ribands, silk lace, gold and silver lace, pins, needles, gloves, silk, and gold and silver tissues, hats of Paris and Rouen, which were used by almost all the people of Europe, and even of the New World. This memorial, which is full of the soundest principles of commerce, and of the most curious details, establishes two very important facts; the one, that individuals, guided only by a sagacious view of their own interest, were well aware that low duties were often more productive to the revenue than high; the other, that France had a considerable trade before this time, which the government was proceeding very fast to destroy by means of injudicious taxation.*

One of the first measures of Colbert, was to establish a council of finance, instituted chiefly for the purpose of reducing to some certain rule, the operations of the collectors of taxes; who, in each separate province, and almost in each separate village, had a different plan of enriching themselves and ruining the country.

Council of
Finance.

The *taille* was justly considered by Colbert the great scourge of the kingdom. This tax was of two kinds, the personal *taille*, and the real *taille*.

Taille.

* For the whole of this document see Forbonnais, t. i. p. 128.

The real *taille* was a fixed impost according to a known estimate, upon houses, lands, and property of all kinds. The personal *taille* was arbitrary, a certain sum was ordered to be raised from each province and district; the collector of the district afterwards apportioned this sum according to the supposed means of each individual. Of course there was no end to the vexations, corruptions, abuses, ruin, and misery, occasioned by this fiscal despotism. The object of Colbert was to diminish the impost in the whole amount; to remedy the abuses; and to convert the personal *taille* into the real. When he assumed the direction of the finances, the sum ordered to be thus levied was upwards of fifty millions; he began by remitting three millions that were due; he then, in the course of successive years, reduced the whole amount to thirty-five millions, and had he lived, he meant to have reduced it to twenty-five. He ordered that the collectors should not seize the cattle or the tools, by which husbandmen and artificers gained their bread, to satisfy the demands of the tax. In order to convert the personal into the real *taille*, he took the generality of Montauban for an experiment, and endeavoured to assimilate the tax in that department, to that of the province of Languedoc, where the *taille* was real. But it so happened, that the base on which the tax had

been grounded in Languedoc, was very unequal ; an inequality, however, which was little felt, owing to the smallness and insignificance of the whole sum raised. In order to adapt the tax to the generality of Montauban, Colbert injudiciously took the unequal scale of Languedoc, and the high amount of Montauban. The consequence was, that industry suffered greatly ; in some places the amount of the tax exceeded the whole value of the produce of the land, and cultivation was abandoned. As a remedy for this evil, Colbert, in the most arbitrary manner, forbade proprietors to leave any part of their land uncultivated, unless they likewise left fallow all the rest of their estates. This violence, of course, failed, and at last, the minister was obliged to give large rewards to those who would again cultivate their lands. So unequal was the tax, that in 1727, when the *tailles* were raised in amount, one hundred and twenty thousand livres were given as a compensation to the lands too heavily taxed in the generality of Montauban.

Thus unfortunate was the attempt of Colbert to reform the *tailles*. He left them, certainly, much lower in amount than he found them, and during his administration abuses were restrained ; but he likewise left an extravagant king upon the throne, with whom there existed strong temptations to

extortion, and no other check upon oppression than the personal vigilance and humanity of the minister of finance.

It was the intention, indeed, of Colbert, to have made a regular estimate of the value of property in France as the base of this tax; and he had a conference with the provincial intendants upon the subject shortly before he died. But any regulation on this subject must have been imperfect, so long as there were numerous exemptions, and the powerful refused to bear any portion of the burthen which broke the back of the poor. For instance, in Dauphiny, where there were five thousand hearths, fifteen hundred were exempt from direct taxes, and those of course belonging to the persons best able to contribute.

The Gabelle.

The next subject for review is the *gabelle*. The *gabelle*, or salt tax, was totally different in amount, and even in nature, in the different provinces of France. There were countries of the *great gabelle*, of the *little gabelle*, &c., and many of the *pays d'états* were exempt from this heavy impost altogether. The price of salt varied accordingly, and that which was only worth three deniers in one place, was of the value of thirteen sous in the next village. The consequence was, that many frauds and a most extensive system of smuggling prevailed. The only right course upon this subject,

was to consolidate the various duties into one low tax, and lay on other duties to supply the deficiency. Instead of this simple method, the regulations of Colbert tended to mould into a formal system, an absurd, impossible, and anomalous taxation. In the countries where the *gabelle* was high, the people were obliged to consume a certain quantity of salt. This quantity was fixed at a *minot*, or three bushels for fourteen persons. On the other hand, where the tax was light and the price consequently low, the consumption was limited, and the inhabitants were only allowed to buy fourteen pounds a year for each person. Thus the people were obliged to buy salt where it was dear, and to restrict themselves where it was cheap. With the same view of preventing a fraudulent trade, the provinces where the tax was easy, were ordered to consume a different kind from that used where the fiscal tyranny flourished in full vigour. There are many more such regulations, but those I have mentioned are sufficient to show the absurdity and misgovernment which prevailed.*

* A story related by Madame de Sévigné, gives a curious notion of the discontent of the people at the *gabelle*, and their extraordinary ignorance. A curé of Brittany had bought a clock, which he put up with great satisfaction; a mob collected to look at it; "it is the *gabelle*," said some one; the crowd murmured, and presently the clock would have been destroyed, had not the curé interfered, and as-

Excise. The next department of the revenue upon which I shall touch, is the *aides* or excise. These were raised by Colbert from about one million five hundred thousand livres, to twenty-one millions; this enormous augmentation was chiefly procured by taking possession of the *octrois*, or duties of entrance into towns. Many of these had been alienated by the crown, and others had, always formed a part of the revenues of the towns in which they were levied. Colbert seized them all for the crown, united them into one farm, and soon paid both the capital and interest of the sums for which they had been mortgaged. The policy of this measure was unquestionable; the right is doubtful.

Internal
Commerce.

One of the greatest evils of the country, as I have before said, was the restriction of internal commerce. Colbert did not apply a radical cure to this evil; but he certainly made some progress in amendment, by consolidating the duties of different kinds into one. He left, it is true, the poor wine of one province, to pay more than the rich wine of another, and many vexations of the same sort. But in the preamble to the edict upon this subject, the evil is so fully described, that it

suared the people it was not the *gabelle*, but the *jubilee*. So true is the maxim of Swift, that the best way to overturn a public lie, is to tell another in the opposite direction.

is clear the minister meant at one time or other to encounter it. After recording, that from fear of the Barbary powers, “foreigners had made themselves masters of all the commerce by sea, even that which was carried on from port to port within the kingdom;” it is laid down as a principle, that the most solid means of restoring commerce is the reduction of duties. It is declared, that some of these taxes are so complex that it is difficult to trade, and “there is a danger of being deceived by the variety of duties, and the manner of levying them.” It is observed, that what was called the *nouvelle imposition* of 1599, was inconvenient, because it was to be levied in districts, consisting of a certain number of parishes, out of which nothing could go without paying this tax. It is acknowledged to be “almost impossible that so great a number of taxes should not cause many disorders,” and that persons in trade, from ignorance of the subject, were obliged to trust the clerks of the farmers of the taxes, who had an interest in deceiving them. In the body of the decree which follows, many of these taxes are consolidated, and certain towns are made free of duty as places of warehouse; but no means were taken to abolish entirely internal duties*.

* Of the value of these compared to the vexations they occasioned, some notion may be formed from what hap-

Public
Debt.

Colbert proceeded in a very arbitrary manner with respect to the government debt. Much of the stock in the market had been obtained fraudulently by persons, who instead of advancing money, had promised to extinguish part of the old debt, and had never fulfilled their engagement. In consequence of confusion in the accounts, the interest was often paid several times over; while speculation and extortion of every kind prevailed in all parts of the unwieldy and complicated machine. Colbert entrusted the revision of the whole debt to a chamber of justice, a measure alarming certainly to all capitalists who might be inclined to lend their money to the government; but rendered justifiable perhaps in this instance, by the extent and enormity of the abuses that had prevailed. By the decrees of this chamber of justice, given in 1663, all interest on stock created since 1656 was suppressed; reserving a right to those who had bought it, to be paid in money the sums they had given for it. After some redemptions, partially and irregularly made, it was at length decided by a decree of the same

opened at Lyons. Two duties called *Resve et Haut passage*, formed a perpetual grievance at that place. At length they were taken off in 1555, on condition of an indemnity to the collectors, and the payment of an annual duty of no more than two thousand five hundred livres.

Forbonnais, t. i. p. 287.

chamber of justice, that three hundred and eighty-four millions of livres, of treasury bills, were false, and should be immediately annulled. The King pardoned the guilty on condition of their paying to the treasury the fines his council should impose upon them. This measure seems arbitrary and irregular, but the subsequent steps of Colbert were much more unjust and despotic. By a public decree, he suddenly reduced the interest of the public debt, and paid off a great part of it at a lower price than the stock would have brought in the market. Some who held property in the funds, were reduced to half their fortune, and then paid at the market price; others who had advanced loans to government, were obliged to pay a supplementary sum in order to obtain the interest of the former loan; the arrears owing by the government were not paid at all. In short, the measures of Colbert amounted to a public bankruptcy. This breach of faith shook the credit of the government, produced a general alarm in all families that had money in the funds, and a long continued distrust in the public securities. The minister was never able afterwards to borrow at less interest than ten per cent.*

Upon Colbert's first assuming the direction of the finances, he was so impressed with the mis-

Loans.

* Forbonnais, vol. ii. p. 339.

chief produced by loans, that he issued a decree, forbidding contractors to lend money to the state under pain of death. When he afterwards found himself obliged to borrow to meet the exigencies of war, he did not think it necessary to repeal his own law; and it is a singular fact, that those who lent money to the government were, to the end of the old monarchy, liable to capital punishment. An anecdote is related, however, which shows how much Colbert continued personally averse to loans. During the war of 1672, Louvois advised the having recourse to this expedient, which Colbert vehemently opposed. The two ministers were allowed to argue the question in the presence of the King, assisted by M. de Lamoignon, who, after hearing the discussion, gave his opinion in favour of loans. Upon leaving the conference, Colbert said to Louvois, "You triumph, but do you think you have done an action becoming a man of virtue? Do you imagine, that I did not know as well as yourself, that money was to be found by borrowing? but do you know as well as I do, the man with whom we have to deal? his passion for representation, for great undertakings, for every kind of expense? The road is now open to loans, and consequently to expenses and taxes without limit; you will answer for it to the nation and to posterity."

One of the evils to which Colbert turned his attention, was the excessive number of offices. In an edict which Lewis published on this subject he is made to say that “the best part of the inhabitants of towns have quitted all other employments to devote themselves to the holding of offices;” and that “the great number of placemen, and particularly of those whose duty respects the distribution of taxes, and the levy of *tailles* and *gabelles*, has multiplied the list of persons exempt from the *tailles*; increased law-suits among the payers on account of the inequality of the assessment; exempted the rich at the expense of the poor, and given rise to so many vexations, and constraints under various titles, by many and various receivers and clerks, that the country people (*nos peuples de la campagne*), have found it difficult to subsist.” By the edict which follows this preamble, all offices created since 1630, the treasurers, and comptrollers general, comptrollers of bridges and roads, of provisions, of garrisons, and many others, were suppressed, the King paying by instalments the sums they had given for their offices, which, in general, were not more than five or six times the amount of the salary.

This operation enabled Colbert to announce that there would be a diminution of the *tailles* every successive year; the addition made to the number

who paid, by the suppression of offices, was in itself a reduction to the rest.

Further measures were taken with the same view. All offices belonging to the collection and management of the revenue had hitherto been bought, and the holders considering their places as freehold, thought themselves exempt from all authority and control. Colbert declared the offices redeemable, and obliged the holders to find security for the payment of the taxes they collected. Many of these offices were actually redeemed and conferred upon persons of known character and probity.

Under the ministry of Colbert, almost all the taxes were farmed, except the *taille*. One duty, however, which had hitherto been farmed, viz. that of tobacco, he converted into a royal monopoly, forbidding at the same time, the cultivation of the plant in France.

The receivers were an important branch of administration. They received five sous per livre, or twenty-five per cent. for collection, besides large allowances for extraordinary expenses. Before this time they used also to withhold the money collected nearly as long as they pleased, and often lent it to the King at an exorbitant interest, instead of paying it as soon as due. For the receivers-general were usually the persons who advanced loans to the government, their capital being considered

security for other subscribers. It is manifest that this arrangement was vicious, and some strong remedy ought to have been devised. Colbert, however, allowed the receivers-general to continue the chief loan contractors, and to hold offices that gave a profit of eight or ten per cent. on the taxes. But he fixed the sum for extraordinary expenses at about four and a half per cent., and obliged these officers to give in their accounts regularly.

The domains of the crown were subjected to new management, and made alienable. In order to maintain the navy, the management of private property in woods was greatly interfered with. No woods, to whomsoever belonging, were allowed to be cut, but at certain intervals, and the proprietors were directed to leave standing a number of large trees, and *especially the finest*. The woods belonging to the church and to corporations were made subject to still more restraints and prohibitions.

Domains of
the Crown.

This spirit of interference, this passion of carrying regulation into every thing, was the great error of Colbert. By an order of the parliament, of August 1661, which he seems to have procured, or at least approved of, all persons were forbidden to form any magazine of corn, or to join in any association for trading in that article of food. This law, issued in conformity to a very ignorant preju-

Corn
Trade.

dice, produced a scarcity in the following year, and afterwards a very low price of grain. The farmers were unable to carry on with profit a trade so restricted, and in the end, cultivation was greatly diminished.

Commerce
and Manu-
factures.

The same spirit of activity, partly beneficial and partly mischievous, was discernible in the measures of Colbert on the subjects of trade and manufactures. He made Dunkirk and Marseilles free ports, and took off a duty on tonnage all over the kingdom. He took off custom-house duties to the amount of fifty per cent. with the view of increasing consumption; a very wise and judicious measure. He established, and assisted with large sums of money, exclusive companies to trade with the East and West Indies, a step of more doubtful policy. It is perhaps a question, whether such companies may not at first direct the enterprise and industry of a nation into a useful channel, which, from the caution of individual merchants, and the want of capital in the country, might otherwise fail to be explored. But the advantage of introducing them is counterbalanced by the difficulty which is always found in opening the trade, when these nursing companies are no longer necessary. The connexions they have formed, the peculiar knowledge they possess, and the property vested in their trade, are all brought with great

and mischievous effect, to defraud the consumer and counteract the plans of a government which endeavours to deprive them of their monopoly.

Colbert introduced, and carried to a flourishing state, manufactures of plate glass, of carpets, of tapestry, of lace, and extended that of rich silk stuffs of Lyons; he bought from a person in England a stocking machine, which he introduced into the country; and created manufactories of steel, porcelain, and morocco leather. The most important, perhaps, of the manufactures he introduced, was that of Holland linen, brought by the Van Robais, and established at Abbeville. The manufactures of cloth and serges were augmented and improved. To rouse industry and encourage enterprize, Colbert gave a million of livres annually to the manufacturers. This was a needless measure; the love of gain is the best bounty upon industry; and mercantile sagacity is its own reward. But if this measure was useless, other steps which he took were positively mischievous. He established a new tariff of duties in 1667, which, bearing hard on the import of Dutch linen, induced Holland, a few years afterwards, to retaliate on the French wines, and supply themselves from the country on the Rhine. He was over-meddling in the control of the manufactures themselves. Not only did he write general directions to the manu-

facturers on the management of their business, but he appointed inspectors to visit the manufacturing towns, to see that his rules were observed. Nay, he even ordered by a decree, that if the work was not made of the length and breadth, and according to the model prescribed, for the first offence, the article should be confiscated, and hung on a post with the maker's name upon it; for the second offence, the same penalty and a reprimand; and the third time, the workman was to be attached to the post himself by an iron collar. The minister who ordered, better deserved the punishment.

Every one knows the wise counsel of the merchant, who, when asked by Colbert what he could do for the manufactures and commerce of the country, replied "*Laissez faire et laissez passer,*" "Leave them alone:" or as it may fairly be translated, "Free labour, and free trade."

Yet with all these defects, the early years of Colbert's administration, upon the whole, gave promise of a great and essential improvement in the finances. In the year 1661, the revenue amounted to eighty-four million livres, and the charge of the debt, &c. to fifty-two millions, leaving about thirty-two millions for the public service. In 1670, the whole revenue was ninety-six millions, and the interest of the debt twenty-six, so that seventy millions were clear income. During this

time, likewise, large reductions of taxes had been made. But the wisdom which had discovered in some degree, and in some parts of the administration, the right path of prosperity during peace, failed as soon as a call was made upon the kingdom for extraordinary resources. Colbert then immediately resorted to the vicious and ruinous means of his predecessors.

To provide for the exigencies of the war of 1671, a great number of new offices were created and sold; and the most enormous profits were given to the lenders, who advanced money to the government. The trades which were not yet confined in the trammels of a company, or corporation, were ordered to form one and receive a statute, and those that were already formed, to take out letters of confirmation; both of which operations were attended by a tax.* During the following years the war measures of Colbert were chiefly disadvantageous loans, the interest of which was paid by restoring ancient abuses, and renewing ruinous expedients.

On reviewing the whole administration of Colbert, we shall be disposed to doubt if he may justly be called a great minister. With prodigious industry, and many right views, he seems to have

Review of
Colbert's
adminis-
tration.

* Desmarets. Rapport sur les Finances.

taken no permanent advantage of the circumstances of extraordinary good fortune in which he found himself placed. He did not eradicate any one of the vicious methods by which the people were oppressed and the sovereign betrayed. He left the *tailles*, the *gabelle*, the restrictions on internal trade, the enormous profits of the farmers general, the disorder and profligacy of the contractors, and the sale of offices in the revenue. He preferred trying experiments upon the country by doubtful and complicated measures, to the wholesome influence of just liberty and wise forbearance ; which are as superior to his system, as the simple and sublime theory of Newton to the cycles and epicycles of ancient astronomy. Hence his institutions, which flourished when he was at their head, decayed when he died. The management of the finances was still infected by that irremediable vice, the want of an efficient control. No persons appointed in the view of public good, examined the accounts and checked the expenditure. The revenue continued to be paid by misery, levied by extortion, expended by pride, corruption, and extravagance.

With respect to the encouragement of manufactures during this period, it will be observed, from what has been stated in the beginning of this review, that France was in the enjoyment of many useful and important manufactures, before the

reign of Lewis; and that many of those introduced by Colbert were articles of luxury, intended only for the limited consumption of the rich. Voltaire, in speaking of the ministry of Richelieu, exclaims, "no tapestry, no cut glass, no plate glass."* Yet it does not follow, that a nation without these costly manufactures might not be extremely rich, prosperous, and civilized. The introduction of these fabrics of pomp, may be considered among the illusions of the reign of Lewis. The most important manufacture Colbert introduced, viz. that of Holland linen, was only obtained by a sacrifice of the French vineyards, and the agricultural population of the country. There were other introductions, those of leather, hardware, &c., which did not flourish. The prohibition to manufacture in any form, but that approved of by a minister; the obliging all artisans to enter into corporations; the prohibition to form magazines of corn; must be considered as great and important blemishes in the financial character of this celebrated man.

On the other hand it must be allowed, that Colbert worked with that spirit which, of itself, produces energy in the country where it governs, that the canal of Languedoc does him immortal honour, and that, by taking off some of the duties of

* *Essai sur les Mœurs*, c. 176.

customs, he gave an impetus to the industry of the nation.

Character
of Colbert.

The reader may be curious to know something of the character of a man who has occupied us so long. It is not one which requires much penetration to fathom, or great nicety of touch to describe. Colbert, like Sully, was reckoned harsh and uncivil by the courtiers, whom he treated with little ceremony, and viewed with unspeakable contempt. They at once dreaded and hated the cold looks, dry manner, and rude speeches, with which he received them every time they entered his antichamber, to ask some favour for themselves, at the expense of the King and of the nation. The profligacy which he saw around him, induced him to close both his heart and his mind to all solicitation; hence, he became obstinate and self-willed, believing no man honest but himself, and rejecting advice, not only from thinking meanly of the counsel, but from suspicion of the counsellors. Hence, likewise, he was somewhat unscrupulous in his means, conceiving, that if he served his country, it little mattered whether he observed the strict rules of justice towards persons, with whom the law of morality was no obligation.

It must be allowed, that the rise of Colbert was attended with circumstances, which a biographer would be glad to omit. His conduct to Fouquet,

it is more easy to defend than to approve; and although we may think a man who thus conducts himself useful for the public service, we should be loth to come across him in the relations of private life. He is said likewise to have behaved ungratefully to Le Tellier, to whom he had been clerk. With these blots upon his fame, which however, are common to him, with many of those who have risen high from a low station, it cannot be denied that he displayed great zeal, honesty, activity, and perseverance, in the cause of the public welfare. He declared to the King, and no doubt with sincerity, on the occasion of the Polish election, that an unnecessary banquet, to the amount of three thousand francs, gave him incredible pain: but that he would sell all he had, and pawn his wife and children, if necessary, to carry on the war of the state. No minister certainly ever exceeded him in zeal for his master's glory. In his habits the reader will not be surprised to hear he was severely punctual. He kept his clerks sixteen hours a day at work. His nephew, who was appointed to come every morning at seven o'clock, was one day a quarter of an hour behind the time: he made his excuse that there had been a ball at the palace, and that the attendants were asleep when he knocked at the door. "You had only to come a quarter of an hour earlier;" said Colbert,

“you would have waited that time, and have been here at the hour fixed.” What is not so easy of belief is, that this rigid financier was vain, and wished to make out a pedigree that might give lustre to his family. Yet such is said to have been the fact; and a curious story is told of his seeking, in the church of Rheims, for the tombs of his progenitors.

The last days of Colbert were not of a nature to do honour to the King, or to encourage others to undertake a similar task. The labour of his triple ministry exhausted his mind and spirits. Several little incidents occurred, which created a coolness between him and his master. With a noble zeal for toleration, he had opposed the revocation of the edict of Nantz, and incurred the enmity of the bigots in power. On a comparison of some of his expenses with those of Louvois, he was found to be the least economical of the two, and received a reprimand for it from the mouth of the King. These crosses, though far from indicating his disgrace, fell on his mind; he grew ill, and became wretched. When Lewis sent a gentleman of his household to enquire after his health, the dying minister said, “I do not wish to hear the King spoken of any more; let him now leave me quiet.” He was disturbed by religious apprehensions; and with a phrase that bears a striking

analogy to one which Shakspeare has put into the mouth of Wolsey, he observed, "If I had done for God what I have done for the King, I might have been saved twice over; but now," he added, "I do not know what is to become of me."

If in the course of what I have said of Colbert, I have made little mention of Lewis, it is because he appears to have had little to do with the measures proposed, except the original merit of bringing forward, by the advice of Mazarin, the minister who conceived them. He began the task of reform, indeed, in the most exemplary manner. He looked over the accounts every month, and ordered no money to be issued from the treasury without his signature. But the death of Colbert was a test of the capacity of Lewis, which he was not able to bear, and he seems to have been quite incapable of following the path that this able man had traced out for him. The finances ever after depended on the will of the minister of the day; and in the whole history of France, there is not a period of greater mismanagement than the last thirty years of the reign of Lewis the Fourteenth. The three resources upon which his government relied, were loans at an extravagant rate of interest; the creation of a multitude of exemptions from taxes, under the title of offices, with ridiculous names; such as measurers of hay, inspectors

Finances
after the
death of
Colbert.

of wigs, &c. and a depreciation of the currency, frequently renewed. When, by the carelessness or corruption of the administration, the contractors for loans and warlike stores had heaped together a mass of ill-gotten wealth, the government had no better resource than to appoint a commission, which, with little enquiry, confiscated three or four millions sterling of the property of these persons; thus imitating the disorder, rapacity, and injustice of a Turkish Sultan, rather than the deliberate and legal forms of a Christian state. It was in vain that some of the persons taxed, pretended they had never been concerned in buying stock; the order was irrevocable; and those supposed to be the most culpable were sent to the Bastille.* Desmarests, who took the management of the finances in 1709, has been praised for clear perceptions, and enlarged views; nor does he seem totally unworthy of the character he has received. Yet what were his financial measures? A national bankruptcy; depreciation of the currency; and a too rapid attempt to restore it to its former value.

Of the general system of taxation in France, and the evils it produced, I shall speak on another occasion. Suffice it to say at present, that Lewis the Fourteenth, by expending eighteen thousand

* Dangeau, 12th and 20th of November, 1710.

millions of francs, in the course of his reign,* but especially by his fraudulent bankruptcies, and still more fraudulent alterations of the value of the coin, made the beginning of that mighty deficit, that great breach, through which the patriots of 1789 marched to the capture and destruction of the monarchy.

We have now to consider Lewis in the character of a legislator. Very early in his reign, he resolved to form new codes or ordinances of civil and criminal law; to consolidate the various laws of his predecessors; to reform what was amiss; and to make the statutes of his kingdom consistent and intelligible. For this purpose, he appointed a commission to digest and prepare the work; the Chancellor Seguier, Lamoignon, Talon, Pussort, and Bignon, were the chief members. In 1667 the civil code was published; the criminal code, one for commerce, one for the navy, another for manufactures, another for forests and fisheries, followed. The design of Lewis was laudable and even grand, but the success was not equal to it; of all his objects he succeeded only in one of the least importance. The ordinances of this reign are allowed to be written in a clear, simple style, superior to that of more recent laws;

Legislation
of Lewis.

* At the rate of about fourteen million pounds sterling a year.

but if we look beyond this, we find that they authorize an unjust mode of trial, preserve nearly all the barbarities of ancient times, and leave untouched the evil of having a separate system of laws in every separate province. The mode of trial, or what is now called the code of procedure, was grounded upon an ordinance of 1539; and that code instituted forms and regulations rigorous and unfair in the extreme. Lamoignon protested against it in the council; he showed that it was more severe than that of the Roman law, or of any neighbouring nation; but bigotry and ancient habits prevailed, and the edict was renewed. According to this code, the witnesses against a prisoner were first examined secretly, without allowing the accused to be confronted with them. This provision was founded upon the words of the Roman law, *testes intrare judicii secretum*, which were thus, perhaps falsely, interpreted. The witnesses left alone, one after the other with the judge, were interrogated by him in the manner most likely to criminate the prisoner, and if ignorant witnesses were led too far in their first depositions, they could not afterwards retract without being tried for perjury, a crime punished with death. This custom was a fertile source of false testimony and unjust convictions.

Let us add to this, that the prisoner himself was, according to the French mode of trial, closely examined by the judge to furnish proofs of his own guilt. Far from adopting the humane maxim of English law, that no person is obliged to criminate himself, the whole aim of the French proceeding was to obtain by any means, from the person accused, an avowal of his criminality. But an ignorant and frightened prisoner interrogated by a judge, who does not hesitate to employ all the skill of an advocate for the purpose of obtaining a conviction, can hardly fail to betray some hesitation, to fall into some contradiction, to mistake some circumstance, which may strengthen the suspicion of his guilt. And it is found by experience, that when the accused is placed in the situation of a witness, a guilty person endowed with sagacity and presence of mind is more likely to escape, than an innocent man, embarrassed by ignorance and timidity. But the examination of the French judges did not confine itself then, as it does now, to questioning only: the means of torture were employed, and the incoherent rhapsodies extorted by physical suffering, from weak frames and agitated nerves, were considered as proofs that the accused were guilty, when they ought only to have been taken as confessions that they were

human.* The prisoner was not by law allowed to have an advocate, or even to bring forward any witnesses in his favour.* The only compensation for these hardships to the accused was, that perjury in a witness was punished with death.†

The judges were numerous, and two thirds of the number were sufficient to condemn a man to death. Can it be just to take away the life of a human being, of whom it may be said, the chances are only two to one that he has been proved guilty?

The punishments enacted by the code of Lewis

* Torture was abolished in part in 1780: totally a year or two before the Revolution. The rest of this objectionable mode of trial still remains; the prisoner is examined by the judge in the most insidious manner. I myself saw a man, accused of high treason, examined on his trial in this manner: Judge. Did — bring a proclamation to you, and read it by your bed-side on such a day? Prisoner. No. The judge asked a hundred other questions; he then resumed: When — read the proclamation to you, was he sitting by your bed-side? Prisoner. He never read any proclamation to me. The accused, in consequence of this mode of trial, form what they call a *system*; that is to say, they arrange upon principles of policy, quite independent of truth or falsehood, what facts to own and what to deny; the existence of a *system* of this kind is openly recognized by the French judges, and the more candid of them acknowledge that the interrogation is a test rather of the abilities, than of the innocence or guilt of the accused.

* *Esprit des Lois*, b. 29, c. 11.

† *Ibid.*

were extremely severe. Death was too frequently inflicted without sufficient cause; a robbery of the person on the road was punished capitally, as well as a murder; the receiver of stolen goods forfeited his life as well as the thief. Witchcraft, heresy, and unnatural crimes, were punished according to the laws of France by fire. The method of putting this punishment in execution at the stake was dreadful. When Madame Voisin was burnt, M. de Sévigné observed to a judge, that it was a shocking thing to burn her by a slow fire. "Oh! Sir," said the judge, "there are certain alleviations on account of the weakness of the sex." "What, do they strangle them?" "No, but billets of wood are thrown upon them, and the executioners tear their heads with iron hooks."*

In different parts of France, the law was left after the codes of Lewis, as various as it had been before he reigned and legislated. In what were called *pays coutumiers*, the custom or common law prevailed; in other provinces, and in the *pays coutumiers*, when there was no law upon the subject, the Roman law was used. Five hundred different common laws were known in France, besides the custom of particular small towns; five hundred different interpretations were given to the written

* Sévigné, 21st February, 1680.

law in the various tribunals, and even the different chambers of the same parliaments. Hence an inextricable confusion. Confiscation of goods was, at Paris, the consequence of confiscation of body. That is to say, if a man was condemned to the galleys for life, a punishment inflicted for the lightest causes, his children lost his property. But this law was not admitted in the provinces governed by the Roman law, except in the district of the parliament of Toulouse; nor entirely in the Bourbonnais, Berri, Maine, Poitou, or Bretagne.

It would thus appear that while every useful privilege of the *pays d'états* was subverted, Lewis and his successors preserved with scrupulous faith, every noxious and embarrassing distinction. Perhaps this was policy to prevent union; more probably it was ignorance; most probably, it was pedantry in lawyers, and indifference in the King. These questions concerning the life and death of his subjects, were not like that of the chair with a back to it, of vital importance to the monarchy.

Upon the whole, the law was left by Lewis the Fourteenth in a state nearly as barbarous, as it had been in the barbarous times of the League. No humanity, no regularity, no enlightened wisdom, was perceptible in the code of the great monarch. If we ask the reason why he did so little when he meant so much, we shall find that

he failed from a want of genius. Having no great views of his own, he left the subject to a commission composed of the average lawyers of his day. Had he fixed upon Lamoignon, and two or three other men of large and liberal principles, he might have effected a great reform. But it is vain to expect that lawyers in the mass should amend bad laws. Men are naturally attached to the system in which they have been educated. Lavoisier and even Newton, were rejected as rash innovators, by many of the men of science who were their contemporaries. Science, however, is sure to make progress at last; for experiment and geometry cannot fail to convince the young, and the least prejudiced. But in law, where an ingenious reason may be found for the most absurd institutions, and the dictum of a barbarous baron may be argued to be the result of the most profound reflection, the advance is slower, and the result less certain. Indeed, I am not sure whether it may not be said, that the more absurd and contradictory the law, the more it recommends itself to the minds of men accustomed to find arguments for every thing; practised in the art of making the worse appear the better reason, and delighting in the possession of a science, the foundations of which are not discernible by the vulgar.

To the faults of the criminal and civil law of

the kingdom, we must add the vicious manner of administering it, and the oppression of that which may be called the state law of France.

The Bas-
tille.

The Bastille was the prison usually employed by the police of Lewis. In the early registers of this prison, it appears that most of those detained there were prisoners for trial ; but afterwards the imprisonment was used as an arbitrary punishment without trial. Every one has heard of a *lettre de cachet*, but few know the precise import of that term. It means properly a closed letter of the King, conveying any order to the person to whom it is addressed ; and is used in opposition to letters patent, or open. In the case of which we are speaking, the letter conveyed an order on the part of the King to the person named in it to repair to a certain prison ; his compliance was forced, and when he arrived the door was shut against his departure. The Bastille may be said to have contained generally two classes of persons. The first consisted of those, who in any way disturbed the tranquillity of the capital of an arbitrary prince, by disorders in the streets, by private quarrels, by pretending to inspiration, by quackery, in short, by any act that might excite attention, and ruffle the smooth surface of supine obedience, which despotism is so vain of obtaining. The other class were those, who more directly in-

terfered with the government ; by printing or publishing pamphlets, by composing or singing irreverent songs against the King or his mistresses, or by indiscreet conversation. The evil of these latter arrests, was that they took place on suspicion, without any regular evidence. Thus Voltaire tells us, that the Comte de Bussy Rabutin, was confined in the Bastille for a year and a half, not for the *Histoire Amoureuse des Gaules*, of which he was the author, but for a song he was imagined to have written. Hundreds of others, Voltaire himself among them, have suffered in the same manner. To enquire whether these persons actually did write the lampoons attributed to them, was beneath the dignity of the state, which might be committed if they were proved innocent ; and the imprisoned man himself was often the last to know, or to suspect the offence for which he was suffering punishment. A few cases extracted from the register of the Bastille, will show however, better than any description, the nature of the system.

1663.* *Pradier*, Liberated after two months imprisonment, on condition that he will have nothing more to do with newspapers.

Edmund Coquier, formerly a servant of M. Fouquet ; this man had a secret press, where there

* These extracts are made from a book called "*La Bastille Dévoilée, ou Recueil de Pièces authentiques pour servir à son histoire.*"

was printed for M. Fouquet, a book called "*Réponse à la Réplique du Chevalier Talon.*"

1664. *Robert Hoyau*, jeweller, suspected of intelligence with M. Fouquet, when his trial was in preparation.

1684. *La nommée Besnoit, dite d'Arnonville.* A mischievous woman who had been busy with her tongue.

1685. At this time, begins a register in folio of 280 pages, carefully enclosed in a portfolio of morocco leather; each page is divided into eleven columns, the tenth of which is "Cause of imprisonment," and the eleventh, "Observations." Under the tenth head, there is frequently no entry whatever.

1686. *Le Sieur Duprez*, his wife, his daughters, and his children of the pretended reformed religion. For having intended leaving the kingdom.

Le Sieur de Beringhen, Conseiller au parlement de Paris. Religion.

Le Sieur Marquis de Campagnac. Religion.

La Dame Desfontaines, and her two daughters. Religion.

1687. *L'Abbé Dubois*, a man of extreme wickedness and deceit.

François Brindejouy, chapelain de Mauregard. For speaking against the state.

1689. *Poupaillard*, bad Catholic (this motive occurs in every page).

Le Duc de la Force. Religion.

A person called *La Cour*. *Homme de difficile garde*.

1690. *Jean de Blondeau*, hermit. A suspected person (this motive occurs frequently).

1691. *Jean Moreau*, detained five years, for having dealt in smuggled lace.

Le Comte de la Vauguyon and the *Sieur de Courtenay*, for quarrels amongst themselves.

Pierre Jean Mere, professing medicine at Paris. For bad remedies which he had distributed: detained thirty years, and then transported to Charenton.

1692. The pretended *Marquis Desportes*, his wife, his cook, his footman, and the persons called *Ranson*, *Chabot*, *de Lorme*, and *Chevalier*. All entered the same day without observation, motive, or order of any known minister.

Page 120 wanting. Supposed to be the iron mask.

1700. *Le Sieur le Bar*, arrested at the age of 76; died in the Bastille at the age of 90.

1703. *Pierre François, Marquis d'Arenbergh* (without any specified motive). He was the liberator of Quesnel.

Le Sieur Duplessis, Flamand, detained eleven

years, for having contributed to the escape of the Père Quesnel from the house of the Archbishop of Malines.

Le Sieur le Coq, and *Casimir* his valet, spies of Marlborough and Prince Eugene.

Nothing can prove more clearly than these extracts, the uncertainty, the injustice, the arbitrary cruelty of the imprisonments, inflicted by the King and his ministers; nothing can more evidently demonstrate the necessity of separating the judicial from the executive power. Some are confined for real crimes, some for indiscretion; some on vague suspicion; one man is imprisoned for conscientious adherence to his religious opinions; another receives a dreadful punishment for a very slight offence; a third is confined for a crime wholly fictitious; and others for acts of virtue and merit, which may have drawn down the vengeance of some minister's mistress, or chamberlain's servant.

The administration of justice to the country in general, was extremely partial, irregular, and unjust. If a poor man was condemned to the galleys for a term of years, there was little probability of his ever escaping, and his sentence was converted into a punishment for life.* The small parlia-

* Dangeau, *Léumontey*, 25 November, 1697. The whole passage is so characteristic of the government of Lewis, that I cannot resist the wish of transcribing it. "Le roi a

ments of the provinces, and the judges named by the *seigneurs*, still continued to wield the sword of justice for their own profit, and the oppression of the people. But, if, on the other hand, a person high at court or a noble of any degree, committed a crime, the notoriety of the fact was the only punishment he underwent; and many daring offenders, relying upon the injustice of their cause, insulted the laws with impunity.* Living in the atmosphere of a profligate court, Lewis was accustomed to consider acts of kindness to his nobles as proofs of his goodness and humanity, although, perhaps, the reward of a courtier was the scourge of thousands of his poorer subjects. This is one of the evils of despotism. Indeed, of all the bad effects which unlimited power produces on the character of man, perhaps the worst is, that it thus corrupts the conscience, and stifles the voice

résolu d'ôter de dessus ses galères beaucoup de ceux qui y ont fait leur temps, quoique la coutume fût établie depuis long temps d'y laisser également ceux qui étaient condamnés pour toute leur vie et ceux qui y étaient condamnés pour un certain nombre d'années. On en tirera aussi tous les invalides, et on a résolu d'envoyer tous ces misérables-là dans nos îles de l'Amérique pour les peupler."

* Madame de Sévigné tells us of some one, who went to see himself hung in effigy for contumacy, and afterwards supped and slept at the house of the judge who had condemned him.

of nature. Who is there that can hear the continual cry of approbation echoing all his actions, and not become in some sort persuaded of the infallibility of his judgment? The most scandalous and mischievous profusion, a king is taught to consider as generosity; the most unequal interposition of authority is applauded as an act of justice. I will take as an instance, a story, as it is related by Dangeau, the most assiduous and attached of the King's courtiers. "12th February, 1689. M. de Maurevel was waked early in the morning in his own house by a great noise, which he heard in his court-yard and in the street. It was caused by some bailiffs (*sergens*), who were come to take the horses in his stable, for the pretended debt of a tailor. He put on a dressing-gown, and not having been able to make this *canaille* listen to reason, and one having fired at him, he took his pistols and shot two of them. The rest dispersed very quickly. M. de Maurevel came here to give the King an account of what he had done, and to ask pardon and justice, at the same time offering to go to prison. The King received him very well, and told him to stay at Versailles, till it was known if the affair had passed as he had related. It appears this business will not turn ill for him."—"13th February. M. de Maurevel has received his pardon from the King, and

the safe conduct necessary for his person, and for all his people (*gens*). It was impossible to be better treated."* That indeed it was! Here we find two men killed, said to be officers of justice; and so little enquiry made, that on the very next day, the slayer was set at liberty without the smallest censure. Did the King examine any one on the part of those who had been the sufferers? Did he ascertain whether these persons really fired at M. de Maurevel? At all events, however, his judgment was most precipitate, and evinced a dreadful indifference to the lives of persons, who were called by his courtiers, in the jargon of the day, "*canaille*." Yet no doubt his beneficence was extolled by the titled and decorated slaves who formed his court. But if such was the favour shown to M. de Maurevel, of whom no one ever heard, what partiality may we not believe to have been practised in behalf of the higher nobility and the immediate favourites of the sovereign? In fact, the privileged class may be considered as having, one and all, a letter of licence: if they did not appear at the levee indeed, they were disgraced for ever; but as long as they merely cheated their creditors, oppressed their peasantry, and killed men of low birth in brawls, they might be sure of impunity and protection.

* Dangeau. Lémontey, p. 46.

Judgments
of Lewis.

Panegyrist of Lewis the Fourteenth have told us of two noble judgments* given by the King in the council, where he administered justice in person. One of these, is a decision in favour of some inhabitants of Paris, who had built upon land belonging to the crown; the other, is a judgment in the case of a Persian whose goods had been seized at the custom-house, ordering the goods to be restored, and three thousand crowns presented to the Persian. Yet these are acts of generosity rather than of justice; and the latter was one of ostentation rather than of generosity. No doubt the expectation of that fame, which we are told attended the name of Lewis in the East, in consequence of this act, was one of his chief inducements to perform it. It is only in a barbarous age, or an Asiatic despotism; in the time of St. Lewis, or in the empire of Haroun-al-Raschid, that much good can be produced by the sovereign administering justice in person; in a civilized nation, and an enlightened age, the best thing he can do for his subjects, is to make good laws, and entrust their execution to men who will judge without fear, and without favour.

State of the
Country.

The people of the country, properly so called, seem never to have flourished under the reign of

* "Beaux jugemens." Voltaire.

Lewis. There was splendour and ostentation at court; pomp and profusion among the nobility; some activity in commerce and manufactures; but the peasantry seem to have been throughout, in a state of suffering, ignorance, and degradation.

The year 1681, was the period at which the greatness of the French monarchy was at its acmê; when all the ambitious projects of Lewis had been crowned with success, and the other powers of Europe opposed no resistance to his designs. Yet, in this very year, Colbert, in a report to the King, in which he points out the danger of new loans, says expressly, "But that which is most important, and upon which there is most cause to reflect, is *the very great misery of the people*; all the letters which come from the provinces, whether of intendants, or receivers general, and even those of bishops, speak of it."*

But if this was the condition of the people in a year of prosperity, we have evidence more than sufficient to prove, that the misery which existed in this most flourishing time of the monarchy, was increased during the period of difficulty and distress. The wars of the English revolution, and of the Spanish succession, reduced the country to a state which the people of the most feeble prin-

* Forbonnais, iii. 288.

ciality in Europe might look upon with pity. In 1694, an order was given to drive away all the poor who flocked from the country into Versailles, from a fear that their great number should infect the air.* The councils of Lewis, no longer guided by the severe order of Louvois, and the benevolent vigilance of Colbert, authorized the most dreadful oppressions, and connived at the most flagrant abuses. The collectors of taxes, intent upon amassing fortunes and favouring their own friends, laid waste the country by every variety of vexation, and by all the torturing engines of minute merciless pettifogging tyranny.

History has recorded the misery which accompanied the last war of Lewis, when the army was recruited by the famine of the provinces, and the labourers, whose cattle were taken from the plough by the collectors of the *taille*, filled the ranks of the troops on the frontiers, not because their country gave them any thing to defend, but because the state left them nothing to lose. Yet in the midst of the dreadful scarcity of 1709, Lewis appeared insensible to the distress and misery of his people. If we enquire the reason of this apparent want of feeling, we find that every one was desired not to mention the subject to the king,† for

* Dangeau, Lémontey, 14th June, 1694.

† Mémoires de Madame, p. 41.

fear he should be overcome with grief. Happy the nation whose rulers are not allowed even to know the misfortunes under which the people are sinking !

When peace was concluded, a new evil added to the general distress of the kingdom. The chief subject of embarrassment to the minister of finance, was the depreciation of the coin : he determined upon restoring it to very near its original value. In little more than two years, from April 1713 to September 1715, by eleven successive operations, the price of the marc of silver, which had been raised to forty-two livres ten sous, was reduced to thirty livres ten sous, that is to say, about twenty-seven per cent. The opinion of Forbonnais upon this operation appears to me so sound and so instructive, that I cannot refrain from transcribing it. “ It would be unjust,” says this author, “ not to praise the intention ; but it is evident that these diminutions, announced for the space of two years, disturbed commerce to a very great degree. If some wish to lend, few will be found to borrow ; the condition of debtors who are unable to free themselves becomes very bad ; there is besides, a new uncertainty in property. From that moment, the more rapid the operation, the less it will be felt. There was another vice in these measures, which ought

to have induced the minister to abandon them. Since 1689, money had been continually depreciated; all engagements contracted for twenty-four years, were established in a coin of a third less value than that which was to be in circulation on the 1st of September, 1715; consequently the taxes were to become heavier in the same proportion; the debtors of the fundholders would have to pay their creditors a third more than they had engaged for; a farmer who had engaged to pay ten marcs of silver for his rent, was obliged to pay fourteen, without any hope that his produce would maintain its price. There must naturally have resulted a dreadful misery in the country; a great void in consumption, circulation, and in the public revenue. It is very evident that it was wrong to make the preceding depreciation; but after twenty-four years of an augmented currency, these great diminutions were a fatal blow. The only right operation at this time was to fix the coin immoveably at its depreciated price.”* The consequences thus sagaciously pointed out, did not fail to be felt. During the course of two years, the misery of the country kept continually augmenting; in the uncertainty of property, credit was nearly annihilated; money

* Forbonnais, t. 5.

was wanting in circulation; consumption and labour diminished; usury, in vain prohibited, increased its profits, while prudent men were afraid to lay out their capital; the state lay without life or motion; the revenue mortgaged for ever; the surplus insufficient for necessary expenses, and this consumed and expended by anticipation. A famine ensued in the train of these evils, of which it was the consequence and the climax; country houses were left to ruin, and the land abandoned by the farmers, without live stock, or instruments of husbandry. Two years after the cessation of war, peace had not yet made its benefits perceived; and the excess of misery had produced in the people that apathy which seems to announce the fall of states.* It should not be omitted that the evils of this operation were not averted by being accompanied at the same time with a forcible reduction of the interest of the public debt. The interest of money lent to the state was reduced by an edict to four per cent. But this measure, the injustice of which was the more manifest, since it comprehended debtors of different kinds, aggravated rather than relieved the embarrassments of commerce, and the want of confidence of capitalists.

* Forbonnais, t. 5, p. 64.

We may now understand perhaps, why the people, sick of glory, and tired of the vain splendour which Lewis loved only for his own sake, viewed the last days of their monarch without regret, and accompanied his corpse with execrations.

Conclu-
sion.

If we endeavour to sum up in our minds, the different parts of the government we have gone over, we shall be inclined to draw, as a result from the whole, that Lewis the Fourteenth was an industrious, and even a benevolent ruler, but not endowed with genius to direct his industry or wisdom in the application of his benevolence. He excelled in those parts of administration, which are at the same time the least difficult and the least important; in equipping troops, in expending large sums upon magazines of war, in holding magnificent courts, and building sumptuous palaces. He failed in those larger and more lofty functions of sovereign power, which consist in providing for the happiness of a people; in giving equal protection to all classes; in allaying religious dissensions; in extending industry and commerce by liberal principles; in making taxation as light, as certain, and as justly proportioned as possible; in laying the foundations of future prosperity to his kingdom, when he himself should be no more. If he augmented the territory of

France, it was by destroying the sinews of her internal strength, and leaving his successors embarrassed by the obligations he had contracted. If he maintained domestic peace, he at the same time sowed the seeds of future discord, by augmenting the importance of his plebeian, and preserving at the same time the privileges of his noble subjects. The manufacturing and commercial classes, who in the course of a long internal tranquillity, acquired riches, intelligence, and knowledge, formed no part of the constitution of the monarchy; they were excluded from the pale of power, and became the natural favourers of those writers, who towards the end of the reign of Lewis, were preparing to attack his fame, and ridicule the frame of government he had formed and established. This was a great and very fatal defect in his policy. All his attention had been directed to please, and at the same time depress his nobility; but in so doing, he raised another great body by their side, which he forgot to conciliate by privileges, and could no longer terrify by a display of force and authority.

There are some measures, certainly, which it would be unjust to blame Lewis for not effecting, as they required either the knowledge of a later age, or the intuition of a man of genius. But there are others which it is astonishing he should

not have effected. He might have established a wise and certain system of taxation, that would have deprived his intendants of the arbitrary power they so much abused. He might, when at the summit of his power, have laid a foundation for taxing the nobles and the clergy, in due proportion to their wealth. He might have abolished the *taille*, the *gabelle*, and the *corvées*, and have subjected his people to the burdens of the state, in proportion, not to their rank, but to their wealth. He might have introduced a more humane code of laws, and assumed to the state the whole administration of justice, abolishing the authority and peculation of the petty lords. He would thus have united all classes in support of the monarchy, and paved the way for the tranquil introduction of those changes, which progressive time and increased civilization might require.

It must be remembered, however, that Lewis the Fourteenth conferred one benefit upon France of the utmost importance, although perhaps due more to the age in which he lived, than to himself. His administration established the rule of order, and thus advanced his people a step in the progress of civilization. Those who had property, cultivated it in peace; those who had leisure, could pass it in enjoyment; those who were industrious,

could pursue their occupations in safety. Although this is far from being all that is required of a government, yet it was a great improvement upon any government that France had seen before. No inequality or pressure of taxation, could inflict misery equal to that caused by the noble highway-men, who infested the country in the preceding age. In estimating personal merit, perhaps, we ought to give the credit of this change to Richelieu, but in chronological accuracy, we must fix the period of its accomplishment during the age of Lewis the Fourteenth. Under the protection of law, and a strong executive power, commerce flourished; manufactures increased; arts were promoted; nay, liberty itself was destined to be finally the result of the knowledge and science, which internal peace had fostered. For the liberty of modern Europe, different from that of ancient states, is the offspring, not of anarchy, but of order. In England, it sprang from the arbitrary reign of Elizabeth; in Holland, from that of Charles the Fifth; in France, from the despotism of Lewis the Fourteenth.

It is to this same internal peace, that we are to ascribe the much vaunted glory of letters in this age; and it was in this way that Lewis most effectually promoted them. For I own it appears to me that the direct encouragement given by Lewis,

Literature.

was rather an obstacle than an aid to the real splendour of literature. What he actually did, was neither great in its total amount, nor discriminating in its separate parts. The intention, undoubtedly, was good, but the incapacity of his agent did much to defeat his intentions; and posterity must laugh to find that a heap of unknown scribblers were more richly rewarded than Racine and Boileau.

In fact, the best writers of the age, were beyond the sphere of the monarch's influence. Corneille is imbued with the flavour of another age; of times of greater independence and a less general servility to power; La Fontaine was removed far from the court by the simplicity of his character, and never had a share of the bounty of Lewis. Racine and Boileau, fairly considered, were not produced by royal munificence, but adopted by it after they had made their talents known; and I leave it to good judges of literature to say, whether the flight of their poetry was not impeded by being fastened to the chariot of the court. The protection of Moliere against the hypocrites of the day is indeed a bright jewel in the crown of Lewis; but against this trophy is to be set the death of Racine, caused by the intemperate pride, and jealous anger of the monarch. The real advantage that literature derived from the

reign of Lewis, was the same with that which was enjoyed by trade and commerce; the advantage of internal peace, and tranquillity. Indeed the maxim of "*Laissez faire*," may be applied to the one as well as to the other.

The literature of the age of Lewis the Fourteenth, continued for a century after its appearance, the prevailing literature of Europe. Much of this success must be attributed to the time in which it appeared; a time, when the arts of social life were generally spread, and the want of a general language of communication was felt, not by the learned only, but by all. Latin was consequently discarded, and the language of the most powerful nation universally adopted. Had the merits of literature only been consulted, the poetry of England, though less perfect in execution, was far more noble in kind than that of France; and the poets of Italy, from Dante to Tasso, had all the polish of a civilized age, together with the strong conception of rude and republican times. But France enjoyed the same good fortune in her letters as in her arms. Italy had admired the poor conceits of Marini, and to belong to the seventeenth century, is a term of reproach in her literary history. England abandoned her own glory in poetry as in politics; and the same age in which the Stuarts,

made their country subservient to foreign dictation, saw Shakspeare disfigured, and Milton neglected. The authors who surrounded the French court carried refinement to its utmost pitch, and thus became the standard of every nation in Europe; the verses of Racine spread with the glory of Turenne through the world, and contributed to throw a glare round the age of Lewis the Fourteenth, which long blinded Europe, and still dazzles the bigoted and baser part of it.

BOOK THE SECOND.

CHAPTER I.

Views of the English Ministry which came into Office in 1710. Sanguine hopes of the Tory Party. Question of the succession. Unpopularity of the Ministry. Their divisions. Oxford and Bolingbroke. The Jacobites. Measures of the Whigs. Debates in Parliament. Death of the Queen. Succession of the House of Hanover. Proceedings in Parliament. Rebellion of 1715. Punishment of the Rebels. Septennial Act.

BEFORE relating the occurrences which happened in France after the death of Lewis the Fourteenth, it may be convenient to take a view of the circumstances which immediately preceded and followed the establishment of the Electors of Hanover on the throne of England; an event of scarce less moment, both to Great Britain and to Europe, than the Revolution which placed the crown on the head of King William.

When, by a conjunction of the most despicable intrigues at court, and the most unfounded clamour in the nation, Queen Anne was induced, and enabled to dismiss the ministers and the general, to

Views of
the Tory
Ministry.

whom her reign owes all its glories, the leaders of the Tory party came into power animated by many hopes of private advantage, and some designs of public policy. Their principal objects indeed, were “the conservation of the power they had acquired, great employments to themselves, great opportunities of rewarding those who had helped to raise them, and of hurting those who stood in opposition to them.*” But mingled with these selfish and factious views, were some projects which they conceived beneficial to the nation. They wished to draw the country out of the war, which, as they thought, had been too long prolonged, and to disentangle her from those alliances which William the Third had made, and the Whig ministry of the Queen maintained and strengthened. It was their settled opinion, that England had been needlessly involved by King William in the concerns of the continent; that her true policy was not to watch the balance of power, but to keep aloof from the disputes of foreign states; to be engaged in the relations of commerce with every nation, but in strict alliance with none. To crown all, the Tory ministers hoped so to break the Whig party as to secure themselves during the Queen’s reign, trusting that they should soon become too considerable not to make their own terms in all events

* Letter to Sir William Wyndham, p. 19.

which might happen afterwards; concerning which, few, if any of them, had any settled resolution.*

The means of accomplishing these ends, appeared at first sight amply sufficient. The great body of the landed proprietors formed the main force of the Tory party; to this strength, the Queen had now added the influence of government, while the trial of Sacheverel had brought them popularity, and rivetted the attachment of the clergy. So that their followers were wont to say, they were supported by the crown, the church, and the people. On the other hand, they were accustomed to look upon the Whigs as a weak minority in the nation, resting chiefly on foreign alliances, the bank and the trading interest, and therefore likely to fall in pieces when these props were taken away.†

The conclusion of the peace of Utrecht accomplished one of their chief objects. The event was

* Letter to Sir William Wyndham, p. 22.

† "You may observe yourself and make others observe too, what a difference there is between the true strength of this nation and the fictitious one of the Whigs. How much time, how many lucky accidents, how many strains of power, how much money must go to create a majority of the latter; on the other hand, take but off the opinion that the crown is another way inclined, and the church interest rises with redoubled force, and by its natural genuine strength." Bolingbroke's Correspondence, Nov. 10, 1710. See likewise his Letter to Wyndham.

hailed accordingly with the utmost joy by their adherents, who confidently looked forward to the glorious summer which might be expected to follow so propitious a spring. Yet in the midst of these sanguine anticipations, some untoward circumstances, which were overlooked by the generality, cast a damp into the bosoms of the leaders.

The first obstacle the ministers had to struggle with, was the very peace upon which they had calculated as the basis of their power. The nation was not yet exhausted by war; and even if it had been so, a mortifying and disappointing peace can never long be popular with a high spirited people. The opposition of the allies and the Whig party, had exhibited the ministry to Europe as the secret adherents of France, our ancient rival; and many who had most longed for peace, were disgusted with the orders given to the Duke of Ormond to separate his troops from those of the confederates; a measure which seemed to close a war of glory, by a disgraceful abandonment of our friends.

The business of the succession was likewise full of difficulties. Dr. Arbuthnot spoke indeed of the Queen's health with confidence; but this confidence savoured more of party wishes, than of medical skill, and her broken constitution and constantly returning fits of the gout, foreboded that her life could not last many years. As she grew

older, she became more and more attached to the family from which she sprang, and looked forward with some anxiety to the chance of her brother's inheriting her crown. But the nation still bore an inveterate dislike to the Roman Catholic religion, and the very cry of the church in danger, by which the Tories had climbed to power, had made the people more alive than ever to the danger of a Popish reign. The ministry found it necessary, therefore, in all their public professions, and in all the speeches put into the mouth of the Queen, to declare an unshaken determination to maintain the act which settled the crown upon the House of Hanover; and even with every precaution, a large body of the Tories, called by the ministry the Whimsicals, had separated from their standard, and avowed their alarms for the security of the Protestant succession. On the other hand, the Elector of Hanover had no confidence in the promises of the Tory administration. Looking upon the Whigs as the firm friends of the act of settlement, and warned by the Duke of Marlborough against the intentions of their opponents, he seemed determined to rely solely upon that party, and to use the first moment of his power to place the helm in their hands. This prospect of course augmented the numbers of the Whigs, and brought many of the selfish and the venal to the ranks of

the minority. Thus the ministry, however triumphant for the present, found their future prospects clouded on every side: indeed so embarrassing was their situation, that it was extremely difficult for them to choose any part that could lead to final and permanent success. If they openly and zealously supported the succession of the House of Hanover, they might lose the Queen's favour without any certainty of gaining that of the Elector; if they favoured the Pretender, they exposed themselves without any safe retreat to the risk of being condemned as traitors and conspirators.

To aggravate all these difficulties, the government was conducted by two men, who agreed in nothing but their dislike and treachery to one another. Robert Harley, Earl of Oxford, was so long an object of bitter enmity to the Whigs, that it would be unjust to take his character from their partisans. But we may safely consult upon this subject, the memoirs and writings of the Tories. For if there are none more liable than party men to err in the estimate of the character of their opponents, none are better qualified to judge of the merits of their own leaders. The intercourse of party brings so many of the chief qualities of the mind and heart into play, requires so much decision, firmness, promptitude, good faith, honesty, and resolution, that no man can long be a leader,

without making himself thoroughly known to all the more sagacious among his followers. By the declaration then, of his own party, Harley was a man peculiarly unfit to guide in a moment of crisis; he was dilatory and insincere, always seemingly full of business, yet as constantly delaying to resolve till it was too late, and then excusing himself to his colleagues and his sovereign by false pretences. His chief merits were a talent for intrigue, and a capacity for speaking and leading in parliament, when he applied himself to it in earnest; but his extreme indolence, joined to a great share of good humour, made him think too lightly, and act too feebly for the difficult times in which he was placed. While he fancied that he could cajole mankind by his address, his perpetual intrigues with the heads of all parties to gain support for the day, deprived him of many of his zealous friends; and the close reserve of his manner, contrasted with the honest frankness of Somers, contributed still further to alienate affection and confirm suspicion.* Even his love of literature and men of wit, which would have been a virtue in a more tranquil age, was a defect in him. He employed hours that should have been devoted to active exertion, in penning rhymes and patronizing

* Swift. Enquiry into the behaviour of the Queen's last Ministry.

poets. It is curious that Walpole, his successor, has been blamed, and with equal justice, for the opposite quality. For the same patronage of letters, which was a defect in the latter days of Queen Anne, would have been a merit in the reign of George the Second.

St. John was a man of a very different kind. Admitted into the high office of secretary of state, when he was little more than thirty years of age,* he had every kind of brilliant advantage; a handsome person, quick apprehension, wit, learning, and taste; he was the best orator in the House of Commons, an admirable writer, superior to Swift, Pope, and Arbuthnot in conversation, good tempered, and a despiser of money. With these qualities, it is no wonder if his self-conceit was great, and his pretensions boundless. But unfortunately for him, with all his parts, he wanted steadiness of

* There seems to have been some misunderstanding with respect to the age of Lord Bolingbroke: Lord Chesterfield says he was Secretary at War when only twenty-four, and Swift speaks of him as little more than thirty when he was Secretary of State; while from his epitaph inserted in Mallet's life, it appears that he was born in 1672, and consequently was thirty-two when he obtained his first office, and thirty-eight when he was appointed to the second. A letter of his own, and a bust at Lydiard, fix his birth in 1678, and thus agree with the former account, which seems evidently the true one.

purpose, and honesty of design ; he was a rake acting the part of a high-churchman, an intriguer in the garb of a patriot, an unprincipled genius, assuming the opinions of a sincere bigot. Let it be added to this, that St. John had no strong masterly purpose ; he seemed to seek the gratification of his vanity more than the attainment of his country's good, or even than the satisfaction of a lofty ambition. His chief aim was to have the reputation of being at once the best man of business, and the first man of pleasure in the kingdom ; his excesses in wine and love were as notorious as his speeches or his negotiations, and his favourite model was Alcibiades, the most unprincipled of the great men of antiquity.* Hence it happened that he never long possessed the confidence and obedience of his party. For it is the character of party, especially in England, to ask for the assistance of a man of talent, but to follow the guidance of a man of character.

Two men so differently formed were made to differ, and it was not long before they did so. They had risen by supplanting their friends, and they felt the distrust they were fitted to inspire. Harley, like an owl in the day-time, or a mole above ground, hastened back from the broad light

* Swift. Enquiry into the behaviour of the Queen's last Ministry.

in which his station placed him, to the darkness and concealment of private intrigue. St. John had not been many months in office, before he complained that the Queen was cold, and his colleague an enemy.* His rash activity and heedless vanity, were perpetually stumbling against the supine indolence, and suspicious reserve of the Treasurer.

Many little circumstances contributed to increase the enmity between the two ministers. A newspaper writer affirmed that Guiscard, who stabbed Harley at the council board, intended to wound the Secretary instead of the Treasurer, and the insinuation was attributed to the conceit and jealousy of St. John. When St. John was made a peer, he wished to obtain an earldom lately extinct in a branch of his family, but the Queen would not consent to his being more than a viscount, and the Secretary ascribed her refusal to the malice of Harley.† From this time they were never cordial

* Swift's Letters, 1711. Bolingbroke's correspondence, May 18, 1711. "We who are reputed to be in his intimacy have few opportunities of seeing him, and none of talking freely with him. As he is the only true channel, through which the Queen's pleasure is conveyed; so there is and must be a perfect stagnation till he is pleased to open himself and set the water flowing."

† Swift's Enquiry. Bolingbroke in his letter to Wyndham, says, "I was dragged into the House of Lords in such

together; and had it not been that St. John's knowledge of the French language made him necessary to the ministry, in the negotiations for peace, Harley and Mrs. Masham would have forced him to resign his office.

The most anxious of all their cares, however, lay in the preparation of means of safety for a future reign. About an hundred country gentlemen, associated under the name of the October club, insisted on the dismissal of all the Whigs, a severe punishment of the former ministers, and such a thorough establishment of the Tory party, as might make them formidable to any successor whatever. St. John seems to have been inclined to adopt their notions.* But the Queen was by no means willing to go the lengths they desired. She had been so long, and so carefully taught that she was a tool in the hands of the Whigs, that she resolved for the future not to put herself in the hands of any party whatever; and in the words of Swift, in order not to be directed, she would not allow herself to be advised. The future safety of the Tory party, and even the choice of a successor, were indifferent to her in comparison to the maintenance of her own fullness of power, and like

a manner as to make my promotion a punishment, not a reward." p. 31. See likewise his correspondence.

* See his correspondence, vol. i. Swift, Journal to Stella.

many other sovereigns, she fancied that by giving hopes to every party and complete sway to none, she should reign supreme over all. Thus the lessons of the Tories were turned against themselves; and it was found that in Queen Anne, as in many other persons, great weakness of mind was compatible with unconquerable obstinacy. It happened likewise, unluckily for the ministers, that the notions and habits of the Queen fell in with the prevailing foibles of Lord Oxford. He also aimed at securing himself, not so much by establishing the dominion of one party, as by making friends with all; vainly imagining that the Whigs, if not driven to despair, would respect his moderation and forgive his treachery. And as the principal fault of his mind was delay; so it happened that delay was the principal weapon by which the Queen warded off the importunities of the persons about her. Thus Harley was dilatory by nature, and the Queen by design: while on the other hand the Queen was irresolute by constitution, and Harley upon system. Hence the affairs of the state dragged slowly on, and the prime minister bearing the blame at once of his own faults and those of his mistress, was accused of treachery by numbers of his party, of unsteadiness by his dearest friends, of incapacity by all. Let us now see the

effects produced by this situation of the court and country upon public events. 1713.

The work of the peace was accomplished by the ministers in the face of a strong opposition in parliament, who were assisted by the influence and authority of all the allies. To increase this difficulty, the Queen appeared lukewarm in the support of her servants; and it was remarked, that being present in the House of Lords on the day a motion was made by Lord Nottingham against any peace while Spain continued in the hands of the Bourbon family, she chose to be led out by the Duke of Somerset, who had spoken strongly for the motion, in preference to her own chamberlains.* When the treaties were concluded, that part of them which related to commerce, excited a violent opposition. The ministers had stipulated that all the goods and commodities of France, should be received on the footing of the most favoured nations, a stipulation which was loudly complained of by the manufacturers of wool and silk, more particularly the former. Various arguments were employed to show that labour being cheap, and the currency debased in France, she could afford to sell her manufactures at a lower rate than the English.†

* Swift. Enquiry, &c.

† It is curious enough that about a century afterwards

1713.
Commer-
cial Treaty.

The erroneous notions which prevailed in those days respecting the balance of trade, were turned to great account on this question. It was said that in the days of Charles the Second, before the prohibitory duties were imposed, we lost a million a year by the excess of the imports over the exports; while on the other hand, the trade with Portugal yielded five or six hundred thousand pounds yearly in bullion. This view was grounded upon a common, but very strange error. Because men had taken gold and silver as the most convenient medium of exchange, they came to believe that these two metals were the only substances which properly constituted wealth. As if he who possesses flocks, and herds, and houses, and clothes, were not as rich as he who possesses a heap of bullion! What is no less strange, this error sprang up, and was fostered among merchants, the practical men who made their fortunes by the art whose principles they did not under-

reasons were employed to show that our commerce and our manufactures suffered because our currency was debased, and that of other countries was not. But the one argument is as groundless as the other. If the currency is debased twenty per cent. in A, the money price of the goods of A, will exchange for a nominal twenty per cent. less than before in the country B, but when that money returns to A, it will again be converted into a nominal twenty per cent. more than before. So that all things remain equal.

stand. So powerful was the mercantile theory 1713.
at this time, that Sir Charles Cooke, Sir Theodore Janssen, and others of the first merchants of London, published a periodical paper, in which they asserted that a free commerce with France would be a greater calamity than the fire of London; that country gentlemen would find their rents decay, and the common people be obliged either to starve, or to emigrate.* This absurd doctrine was supported by so many petitions, and the forces of the Whigs were aided on this occasion by so many of the Tories, that a bill to carry the articles of the treaty of commerce into effect was rejected by a majority of nine voices. But Sir Thomas Hanmer, who had moved the rejection of the bill, a few days afterwards proposed June 1713.
and carried an address to the Crown, thanking the Queen for the great care she had taken of the honour and security of the kingdom in the treaty of peace, and likewise for having laid so good a foundation for the interest of her people in trade, but praying at the same time that she would appoint commissioners to explain and perfect those articles which related to commerce. The Queen, in her answer, took this address in the sense of an approbation of all the treaties; and the opposition, by a manoeuvre which is not uncommon, thus

* See Tindal, 8vo. v. 6, p. 82.

1713. found their victory explained away by those who had helped to gain it. Notwithstanding the vote of the Commons however, the general sense of the nation was strongly against the treaties of commerce; and the peace, falling into disrepute, helped to destroy the ministry who had made it. "The very work which ought to have been the basis of our strength," says Bolingbroke, "was in part demolished before our eyes, and we were stoned with the ruins of it. Whilst this was doing, Oxford looked on as if he had not been a party to all which had passed; broke now and then a jest which savoured of the inns of court, and the bad company in which he had been bred: and on those occasions where his station obliged him to speak of business, was absolutely unintelligible."*

Let us now consider this matter of the treaty of commerce without the party considerations, which at that time were the chief cause of the interest it produced. There can be nothing more evidently absurd, it must be allowed, than the pretension to produce every commodity in every country; and to require the protection of restrictive laws for every article of produce or manufacture against foreign competition. Were such demands to be always listened to, there would

* Letter to Sir W. W. p. 51.

hardly be such a thing as commerce in the world, and nations would be consuming bad articles at a dear price, in order to favour some one class among themselves. As reasonable would it be for a country gentleman to say he would have his coat, shoes, and hat, made at home by his own labourers, when it is evident that they could not be so well made, and his men might be much better employed. 1713

The first rule then, on this subject, is to allow a general freedom of commerce. But to this rule several exceptions are to be made. When the production or manufacture of a particular article is necessary to the strength, greatness, or independence of a country, economical reasons must yield to political, and some wealth must be sacrificed for the sake of national security. Likewise, when a particular branch of industry has been greatly favoured by the law, the protection which has been given must be taken away very gradually, lest the people employed in it should suddenly be reduced to want and famine.

If we apply these principles to the commercial treaty of which we are speaking, it will be seen that on general grounds, the opposers of the treaty had little reason on their side. Besides, the stipulations were not that French goods should be admitted duty free; but that the goods of each

1713. country should reciprocally be received on the footing of the most favoured nations. 'The allegations of the petitioners that labour was cheap, and money depreciated in France, deserve little attention. Experience shows that cheapness of labour may be counteracted by skill and activity.

Other considerations intervened on the subject of the Portuguese wines. We had a special treaty with Portugal of the year 1702, called the Methuen treaty, by which we agreed to receive the wines of Portugal for a third less duty than those of France, provided the Portuguese admitted our woollens. Sir William Wyndham alledged that our woollens would be admitted at all events, whether they were provided for by treaty or not, and this is very probably the truth. In any case it seems a very awkward mode of forwarding commerce, to restrain the taste of a nation in wine, and debar it from some of the most delicious productions in the whole world, for the purpose of improving the sale of woollen goods. Indeed it is certain that if the wines of all countries had been placed on an equal footing, a demand for our manufactures would have been found somewhere fully equal to the consumption of wine. Laying all these objections aside, however, some political reasons might be alledged against the commercial treaty with France. On the breaking out of a

war there is no greater inconvenience to a nation, 1713. at a time when she wants all her resources, than the loss of a great branch of her commerce; and experience as well as reason teaches us that of all wars the most frequent, and the most formidable to England, are those in which she is engaged with France. The same argument may be urged in support of the Methuen treaty with Portugal. I confess that this view, if not conclusive, appears to me to be deserving of the utmost attention.

In the times of which we are treating, however; the commercial interests, and even the foreign policy of the country were overlooked in the great struggle between two rival principles of domestic government. Upon the occasion of the treaty of commerce, the Whigs repaid their opponents for the unjust stigma which had been fixed upon them by the cry of the church in danger. "I doubt," says Swift, "my friends the rabble are at least grown trimmers, and that setting up the cry of trade and wool, against Sacheverel and the church, hath cooled their zeal."*

The intrigues of the Jacobites during this important period, were extremely active, though far from being equally successful. The change of ministry in 1710 quickened all their energy, and they fondly anticipated that the affection of the

Jacobite
intrigues.

* Swift to Bolingbroke. Aug. 7, 1714.

1710. Queen for her brother, and the despair of the Tories of ever gaining favour at the court of Hanover, would make a change in the succession established by law, an easy and even a popular measure. But the irresolution and prudence of Anne, the timidity and conciliatory policy of Harley, together with the real Protestant feelings of both, defeated all the designs of the Stuart faction. Yet they were lured on with an appearance of favour, both by the Queen and the ministry. The Duke of Berwick informs us, that towards the end of 1710, the Abbé Gaultier, who was charged with the secret negotiation between France and England, came to him at St. Germain on the part of the Earl of Oxford. After speaking of the designs of that minister in favour of the Chevalier, he insisted on three conditions, 1st, that no one at St. Germain, not even the Queen Mother, should be informed of the affair; 2nd, that Queen Anne should enjoy the crown during her life; 3rd, that securities should be given for the preservation of the church of England, and of the liberties of the kingdom. To all this Berwick willingly consented, and obtained the sanction of the Pretender; but when he wished to enter into detail, Gaultier told him it was necessary the peace should be made before so delicate an enterprize could be entered upon. After this artful overture, Mon-

sieur Menager was sent by the court of France to London, to obtain some favour for the Pretender in the negotiations for the peace of Utrecht. He proposed that a secret article should be introduced to release the King of France from the obligations of the engagement, in favour of the House of Hanover, to be contained in the public treaty. St. John said he was afraid the Queen would not put her name to such a document, but he thought she would declare, by word of mouth, that the obligation on the King of France should cease whenever she should disengage him from it. Having conceded thus much, St. John introduced Menager to Mrs. Masham, saying that he himself did not choose to meddle further in this matter. Mrs. Masham, however, was much more bold, and more open; she owned, "that it was the present unhappiness of the Queen to possess the throne of her brother, which the political measures of the state had made legal, and in some sort necessary; that, however, she believed it gave her Majesty oftentimes secret uneasiness: that this was not all the misfortune, but that she was obliged, by the same necessity of state, not only against her disposition, but even against her principles, to further and promote the continuance of the usurpation, not only beyond her own life, but for ever." She confessed that the Hanover succession was "all their aversions," but 1710-13.

1710-13. said, that the rage of the common people against the Chevalier had grown to such a height that the Queen could not sign any treaty of peace without the strongest engagement possible for confirming that succession. It was agreed therefore between them, 1st, That the King of France should be required, in the treaty of peace, to abandon the Pretender and his interests. 2nd, That such a stipulation should not be considered as binding.* With this proof of the sincerity of the monarchs of France and England in his hands, Menager repaired to Utrecht, but when he reached that place, he found that the interests of the Pretender had been made the subject of a separate negotiation between the agents of the court of St. Germain, and the English ministry.

The object of Harley in these intrigues, was to secure the support of the Jacobites in parliament, in favour of his administration and the peace. Accordingly, the Pretender gave orders to all his friends to vote with the minister, an accession of strength which greatly facilitated the peace, and helped to maintain the ministry in their places.† And although the Jacobite agents soon began to suspect that Harley was not sincere in their cause, and warned their master against him, yet they

* Macpherson, *Stuart Papers*, v. 2, p. 288-9.

† *Mémoires de Berwick*.

found they could do nothing better than continue their support, for the Whigs were their decided enemies, and Oxford appeared to them to be complete master of the Queen's mind.* Some among them, indeed, advised the Pretender not to do any thing to forward the peace; and Plunkett, one of their principal leaders, as far as it is possible to understand his obscure plotting, seems to have gained the confidence of the Imperial court, and the Whig party, for the purpose not only of betraying their designs to the Jacobites and the ministers, but likewise with a view of thwarting the peace.† This indeed was the true policy of the Pretender; the continuance of the war to the Queen's death could alone have given him a chance of foreign support, and it is one of the many instances of the vanity of human policy, that the peace was forwarded by the Pretender, whose cause it ruined, and opposed by the Whigs, who by it were enabled to secure their grand object, the succession of the House of Hanover to the throne of England.

The Queen herself continued her wavering and ambiguous conduct; giving hopes by her language to the Jacobites, of conditional support, while she took no measures to give effect to her wishes.

* Stuart Papers, p. 297.

† Stuart Papers, 1712, 1713, v. 2.

1710-13. Speaking to the Duke of Buckingham of the Pretender, she said, "You see he does not take the least step to oblige me. I have no reason to think he values me or my kingdom, therefore I shall give it to the Elector of Hanover." Once when he was pressing her, she replied warmly, "What would you have me do? You know, as the law stands, a Papist cannot inherit the crown, and therefore, any will I may make will be to no purpose; the law gives all to Hanover; and therefore I had better do that with a good grace which I cannot help. He may thank himself for it. He knows I always loved him better than the Elector."*

By these and other speeches, she endeavoured to prevail on her brother to abandon the Roman Catholic church, and declare himself a Protestant. Many of his friends in England gave the same advice; and some, if not most of the Tory members of the House of Commons, in their conversation with the Jacobite agents, professed, that if he would but acknowledge his conversion to the Protestant faith, they would eagerly avail themselves of the opportunity to settle the crown upon his head. The cry against him among the people was entirely founded upon his religion, and there seemed every reason to hope, that with the change

* Stuart Papers, July 1712, v. 2. p. 327.

of faith, their opinion might in a short time also be changed. Thus the Queen, the proprietors of the land, and the people seemed ready to bestow upon him the crown of the three kingdoms, upon his simple renunciation of one form of christianity to embrace another. Nay, many of his immediate partizans, and even some of his Protestant followers, with a casuistry worthy of the Jesuits, said it would be quite sufficient to lay aside the exercise and profession of his religion for a time, with the power of resuming it when he should be safely established on the throne. 1710-13.

But at the same time, others of his counsellors advised him to beware how he committed such an error. A conversion so obviously effected for interested purposes, they said, could inspire no confidence, and would hurt his character without forwarding his cause. The church of England, they argued, ought to be satisfied with a promise of security for her rights and privileges, and an assurance that the difference of religion should make no alteration in the political conduct of the sovereign. When the example of Charles II. was urged in favour of dissimulation, they replied that in this case there could be no concealment; the Chevalier had been educated in the Roman Catholic religion; his renunciation of it must be as public and solemn, as it would be hollow and

1710-13. hypocritical ; destructive to his own peace of mind without being satisfactory to the world.

In these latter reasons the Pretender acquiesced, and surely his decision does him honour. A person who is indifferent to religion may change his outward faith without much diminution of his honesty, but he who is thoroughly persuaded of the doctrines of his belief, ought not to renounce them for any worldly interest. Any sacrifice of state policy may be complied with, out of respect to the opinions of others ; but a change of profession on the most important of all subjects, cannot be made by a sincere believer in his faith, without a conscious postponement of his eternal welfare to his temporal advantage. And mankind will naturally argue, that he who would sell his soul for a great interest, will forfeit his word and honour for a small one.*

Upon the whole, the intrigues carried on in England during these years, although they furnish a most voluminous correspondence, display no regular or extensive plan of operations. With the exception of the Duke of Buckingham, and latterly the Duke of Ormond, the Jacobites seem to have engaged scarcely any persons of weight, rank, or character in their interests. The Tory gen-

* See a Letter from the Pretender. Macpherson, v. 2, p. 525.

1710-13.
tlemen hardly went further than saying that they should be happy to see the Pretender restored *if* he would become a Protestant, and that they would willingly do something for him *if* he would first change his conduct, and dismiss his advisers. In the end, they all sheltered themselves under the necessity of obeying the law, unless repealed by parliament. The truth is, they were ready to submit to either claimant, but not to risk themselves for any.

During the course of these intrigues, the Duke of Marlborough acted with that political duplicity, which forms so strong a contrast to the brilliancy of his military career. On the 13th of June, 1710, he opened a correspondence with the Duke of Berwick, concerning the interests of the Pretender, and appeared extremely anxious for his succession. On the 30th of August, of the same year, he wrote to the Elector of Hanover that the views of the new ministry tended to “overturn the Protestant succession, and with it the safety and liberty of their country, and of all Europe.”*

In Scotland, the Jacobites made a display of their opinions, but with little advantage to their cause. In 1711, the Duchess of Gordon, a Roman Catholic, sent a medal with the Pretender's head

Jacobites
in Scotland.
1711.

* Macpherson, Stuart and Hanover Papers, 1710.

1711-13. upon it, and the legend "*Reddite*" to the faculty of Advocates at Edinburgh, who voted thanks to her at a meeting of their body. Mr. Dundas of Arnistoun, who was charged with the message, made an harangue, in which he thanked the Duchess for sending them a medal of their Sovereign Lord the King, and hoped she would soon be able to send them another upon his restoration, and the finishing of usurpation, rebellion, and whiggery. Scarcely any notice was at first taken of this affair, but upon the complaint of the Hanoverian envoy, the Lord Advocate, who happened to be a Whig, was dismissed from his office for neglecting to prosecute; the offenders were left unmolested. In 1713, two addresses were presented to the Queen from the burghs of Inverness and Nairn, evidently favouring the Pretender. The first of these speaks thus: "We without reserve depend on your Majesty's wisdom in securing our religion, and the succession to the hereditary crown of Great Britain, in the family of your royal progenitors, the most ancient line of succession in the world." The person who presented these addresses was introduced by the Earl of Mar, who afterwards headed the rebellion of 1715.

The Whigs. While the ministry were divided, and the Jacobites feeble, the Whigs grew every day in strength and confidence. They had one sole de-

finite purpose upon which their hearts were set ; 1710-14.
and it may be remarked that in public contests the party which has this advantage over its opponents is almost always victorious. It was an additional advantage that their purpose could be avowed, nay even boasted of, in public. The bond of a common object combined the wisdom and experience of Somers, the temper and moderation of Halifax, the active genius of Sunderland, and the ready wit of Wharton : their deliberations were constant, their zeal unremitting, their union firm. While Harley was alternately making advances to the Pretender, and sending embassies to Hanover, the Whig leaders were in perpetual communication with the Hanoverian envoy, busy in suggesting measures for the further security of the succession. No wonder, therefore, if the Tory ministry were at Hanover considered as decided Jacobites, who waited only for an opportunity to restore the Pretender to his hereditary throne. Indeed so persuaded were the Whig leaders of this intention, that they eagerly pressed the Electress Sophia to send her grandson to England at the head of a body of troops. But the phlegmatic caution of the German court tempered the imprudent zeal of English party ; the Hanoverian statesmen represented that so violent and hostile a measure would oblige the greater part of the people of England

1711-13. to rally round the throne of Anne, whom they still loved, and would not bear to see insulted; while at the same time, the Electoral Prince himself had a decided repugnance to taking up arms in defence of the Queen of England. Indeed it would appear that the Electoral family were not so anxious as might have been expected, to reap the brilliant succession that awaited them; the Electress Sophia had compunctions on the ground of hereditary right, and her son, afterwards George the First, was sometimes so vexed by the intrigues and animosities of the English parties, that he almost determined to remain among his quiet subjects of Germany.

Dissolution
of Parlia-
ment.
1713.

Such was the state of affairs at the time of the dissolution of parliament in the year 1713. The elections were carried in four places out of five in favour of the Tories; yet Harley was accused of indolence and indifference, and the Jacobite agents represented him to their master as appointing Whig sheriffs for the purpose of influencing the elections in favour of that party; a senseless and ignorant imputation. In the winter of 1713, the Queen was seized with a dangerous illness at Windsor, which excited great alarms, and universal expectation. For some time the malady, supposed at first to be gout in the stomach, refused to yield to the remedies prescribed; at length,

Queen's
Illness.

however, the Queen was relieved and restored 1713. to apparent health. Oxford, who remarked the anxiety and trepidation of the persons about her, said to Swift, "These people, when the Queen is ill, think she has not an hour to live, and when she is better, they act as if she were immortal."* The sarcasm was thought applicable by many to the conduct of the Lord Treasurer himself.

This illness of the Queen served ultimately to dishearten the new converts of the Jacobite party, not yet prepared for action, and to infuse new strength into the Whigs. But its immediate effect was to spread a great panic in the city; a run was made upon the bank; it was reported that an armament was prepared in the ports of France to bring over the Pretender, and the funds rapidly fell. To quiet these alarms, the Queen, by the advice of her ministers, wrote a letter to the Lord Mayor, informing him that although an aguish indisposition succeeded by a fit of the gout, had detained her at Windsor longer than she designed, yet she intended soon to return to her usual place of residence, and to open the session of parliament on the 16th February, the day originally fixed. This letter, together with the contradiction of the report concerning the French armament, and the assurance that the Pretender was still in Lor-

* Swift, Enquiry.

1714. raine, restored the fund-holders to their former peace of mind.

Meeting of
Parlia-
ment.
Feb. 16.

On the 16th of February, accordingly, the parliament met. Sir Thomas Hanmer, the same person who had so strenuously opposed the treaty of commerce in the last parliament, was chosen Speaker. Mr. Steele mentioning this circumstance in support of the motion, said, "I rise up to do him honour," on which many members who had before tried to interrupt him, called out, "Tatler, Tatler," and as he went down the house, several said, "It is not so easy a thing to speak in the house; he fancies, because he can scribble,"* —; slight circumstances indeed, but which show at once the indisposition of the house to the Whig party, and the natural envy of mankind, long ago remarked by Cicero, towards all who attempt to obtain more than one kind of pre-eminence.

The Queen, in her speech from the throne, expressed to the two houses her joy at having obtained an honourable and advantageous peace for her own people, together with the greater part of her allies, and her hope that her interposition might prove effectual to complete the settlement of Europe. She remarked that some persons had been so malicious as to insinuate that the Protestant succession in the house of Hanover was in

* Steele's Apology.

danger under her government, but that those who endeavoured to distract the minds of men with imaginary dangers could only mean to disturb the public tranquillity. After all she had done to secure the religion and liberties of her people, she could not mention such proceedings without some degree of warmth, and she hoped her parliament would agree with her, that attempts to weaken her authority could never be the proper means to strengthen the Protestant succession. 1714.

One of the first subjects of deliberation for the parliament, was a pamphlet written by Dr. Swift. From the commencement of their administration, the Tories had shown an excessive sensibility to the attacks made upon them in pamphlets, newspapers, and loose sheets which issued from Grub Street, at the price of a penny apiece. They had not been long in office before they meditated the suppression of this last kind of warfare,* and they accordingly laid a tax of a halfpenny on these cheap productions. But they failed in their object of suppression, for Swift complains, that while the Tories were discouraged by the additional price, the Whig papers continued to flourish under all disadvantages: a proof of the superior wealth, popularity, or wit of the opposition.

Pamphlets
of Swift
and Steele.

The paper war had raged of late more than

* Swift, Diary, January 31, 1711.

1714. ever: the Whigs had several good writers, with Steele at their head, who wrote in their behalf; the ministers employed the pens of Arbuthnot and Swift to defend their measures, and ridicule their opponents. Arbuthnot was a zealous and consistent Tory; Swift had been originally a friend of Addison and Steele; and during the Whig administration, followed their opinions, though perhaps without much concerning himself in political disputes. But he was deeply mortified and provoked at finding his merits overlooked in the preferments of his patrons; Lord Somers, whose favour he sought, either meeting with superior claims on his attention, or not considering Swift a fit subject for ecclesiastical honours, neglected his pretensions, and Swift longed for revenge. It so happened that at the time of the change of ministry, he was in London, charged by the bishops of Ireland with some business concerning the first fruits. Harley treated him with attention, St. John loaded him with flattery, and full of schemes of vengeance for the past, and hopes of fortune for the future, one of the ablest writers in the English language devoted his labour and his wit to the service of the new administration. Such are the accidents which not only give a colour to the lives of authors, but often change the fate of states and empires.

At this time, Steele had written an able pam-

phlet, called the Crisis, sounding the alarm on the dangers of the Protestant succession; Swift had come forth on the other side in a piece called "The public spirit of the Whigs, shown in their generous encouragement of the author of the Crisis." This last production was voted a scandalous libel by the House of Lords, and the printers were ordered into custody; but refusing to answer any questions which might criminate themselves, and a minister having promised to prosecute, they were discharged, and the Queen was requested to offer a reward for the apprehension of the author. Three hundred pounds were accordingly offered; but Swift, far from being discovered and punished, secretly received a hundred pounds from the Lord Treasurer for his performance. 1714.

In the mean time the House of Commons had been more severe with the author of the Crisis. Steele was attacked by name for that and other pieces, and readily confessed in his place that he was the author. A day was appointed for hearing him; public expectation was excited, and when the time arrived, he spoke in his own defence for three hours with great ability. Mr. Walpole, afterwards the celebrated minister, made a speech of great force in his behalf; "Why is the author answerable in Parliament," he said, "for a book which he wrote in his private capacity? And if

March
18th, 1714.

1714. he is punishable by law, why is he not left to the law? By this mode of proceeding, parliament, which used to be the scourge only of evil ministers, is made by ministers, the scourge of the subject." Coming afterwards to the main subject of the work, he asked "From what fatality does it arise that what is written in favour of the Protestant succession, and what was countenanced by the late ministry, is deemed a libel by the present administration? General invectives in the pulpit against any particular sin, have never been deemed a reflection on individuals, unless the darling sin of those persons happen to be the vice against which the preacher inveighs. It becomes then a fair inference, from the irritability and resentment of the present administration against its defender, that their darling sin is to obstruct and prevent the Protestant Succession."* A circumstance of some interest occurred during this debate. Steele had published a paper in the *Guardian*, warmly defending Lady Charlotte Finch, afterwards Duchess of Somerset, from an attack upon her in the *Examiner*, on the ground of alleged misbehaviour at church. Remembering this obligation, Lord Finch her brother rose to speak in behalf of Steele. Embarrassed by the novelty of his situation, he hesitated, and was obliged to

* Coxe's *Walpole*, v. i. p. 72.

stop; but as he sate down, he said loud enough 1714. to be heard, "It is strange, I cannot speak for this man, though I could readily fight for him." These words made such an impression upon that admirable audience, that cries of hear him! hear him! resounded from all parts of the house, and singular to say, Lord Finch rising again, made a speech which flowing from a warm and noble heart, was so remarkable for magnanimity of spirit and clearness of expression, that his very adversaries received him as one whom they would wish their friend. Adopting Steele's language respecting the peace, "we may if we please," he said, "call it here honourable, but I am sure it is accounted scandalous in Holland, Germany, Portugal, and over all Europe, except France and Spain. We may call it advantageous, but all the trading part of the nation find it to be otherwise: And if it be really advantageous, it must be to the ministry that made it." Sir W. Wyndham here rose, and said the ministry would not say the peace was advantageous to them. On which Lord Finch quickly replied, "then it was plain it was advantageous to no one but our late enemies." I have dwelt upon this little circumstance the longer, because it affords a good sample both of the manner in which speaking is not only cherished, but almost created by the applause of the hearers, and

1714. likewise of the admirable fairness of the English House of Commons towards a political adversary. Modesty in the speakers and candour in the hearers, go far towards forming a stile of eloquence at once impassioned and chastened ; while, on the contrary, impudence in the speaker and injustice in the audience, produce tame declamation and extravagant hyperbole.

At the end of the debate, the papers in question were voted scandalous and seditious libels, and Mr. Steele was expelled the house. It afterwards appeared, singularly enough, that the Crisis was sketched, if not entirely composed, by Mr. Moore, a barrister ; that it was corrected by the chief members of the Whig party ; and that at a meeting of the party assembled for the purpose of writing a defence for Steele, Walpole had made a speech, in which he suggested all the topics used by Steele in the House of Commons. Thus no part of the work was Steele's, except the glory and the punishment.

If we now weigh in cool blood the proceedings of the Parliament upon this occasion, we shall see little reason to applaud their conduct either to Swift or to Steele. Generally speaking, there are no worse judges of what is or is not libel, than large deliberative assemblies ; they are naturally prone to affix that appellation upon any book

strongly written against the sentiments of the majority. In the two cases before us, nothing like an offence against the privileges of Parliament was committed, nor was any legal authority called in question. In the case of Swift, the condemnation was procured by the animosity of the Whig lords calling to their assistance the pride of the peers of Scotland. One of the parts of his book most insisted upon, was a passage, where accounting for the propositions for a Union with Scotland towards the end of the reign of King William, the writer said they arose "because it was thought highly dangerous to leave that part of the island, inhabited by *a poor fierce northern people*, at liberty to put themselves under a different king." The pamphlet of Steele, which gave such offence to the House of Commons, is written in language still more remote from libel. Indeed it would not be easy to extract any thing libellous or improperly violent, from either of the two books. It must be confessed, however, that the Lords acted with more temper than the Commons, as they only addressed the Queen for the purpose of discovering the author; whereas the Commons proceeded to punishment, and expelled their member for a work which may have been reckoned a service by the people, whom he was sent to represent. But the less the houses of Parliament meddle with the

1714.

1714. press, unless their freedom of debate or of vote is directly threatened, the better for liberty, and their own real dignity.

March 17.
Residence
of the Pre-
tender in
Lorraine.

The next business in parliament, was a debate in the House of Lords, on the danger arising to the Protestant succession from the Pretender's remaining in Lorraine, and an address was ordered, praying for an account of what steps had been taken, and what answers had been received on that subject. While the Whig peers were thus sounding the alarm on the succession, Lord Oxford endeavoured to prevent the landing of the Electoral Prince of Hanover, with an armed force, by moving for a bill to make it high treason to bring foreign troops into the kingdom. But this stratagem availed him nothing: when called upon to explain his meaning, he was obliged to say that the bill was meant to apply only to foreign troops, introduced by the Pretender; and he was then told that the bill was unnecessary, for such troops, if foreigners, would be enemies, and if natives, rebels. The bill was allowed to drop.

April 5th.
Danger of
the Protes-
tant suc-
cession.

Soon afterwards, the Lords taking into consideration the state of the nation, a question was moved by Lord Wharton, whether the Protestant succession were in danger under the present administration? The ministerial side, after altering the last words of the question, prevailed in negating,

after a long debate, the question itself, but by a 1714.
majority of no more than eight. Sir William Dawes, who had lately been made Archbishop of York, and Lord Anglesea, a thorough Tory in principle, spoke and voted on this occasion against the ministry; they were followed by Lords Abingdon, Jersey, Ashburnham and Carteret, and by all the bench of bishops except three. Lord Anglesea went so far as to say that "as the honour of his sovereign, and the good of his country were the rule of his actions, so he had no respect of persons; and if he found himself imposed upon, he durst pursue an evil minister from the Queen's closet to the tower, and from the tower to the scaffold." In those times such phrases were not empty words, and Harley, the minister alluded to, must have been somewhat roused from his apathy, by so bold a denunciation.

A similar question being proposed in the Com- April 15th.
mons, and discussed in a committee of the whole house, Sir Thomas Hanmer, the Speaker, to the surprise of many, declared in an able speech, that so much had been said to prove the succession in danger, and so little on the other side, that he should vote against the ministry. In the end it was resolved by a majority of 256 against 208, That the Protestant succession was not in danger; but the same majority, to quiet alarm agreed to a

1714. second resolution, that the Queen be desired to renew her instances for the removal of the Pretender from Lorraine. The report of these resolutions produced another and very animated debate.

Reward for
apprehend-
ing the
Pretender.

In the mean time, several motions had been made in the House of Lords. It had been agreed to address the Queen for the removal of the Pretender from Lorraine. Lord Wharton moved that the Queen should be desired to issue a proclamation, offering a reward to any who should apprehend the Pretender, dead or alive. When this barbarous address was reported from the committee, Lord North and Grey said, that such a proclamation could be interpreted in no other way than as an encouragement to assassination; a practice repugnant to christianity, the law of nature, and the laws of all civilized nations; he besought them not to take a step so inconsistent with the character of that august assembly, in a nation and government famed for lenity and clemency. Lord Trevor spoke on the same side, and upon his motion, the last words of the address were altered to “apprehend and bring the Pretender to justice, in case he should land or attempt to land either in Great Britain or Ireland,” and the time of issuing the proclamation was left to

the Queen's discretion.* These mitigations were 1714.
adopted by a majority of no more than ten ; a proof that the dangers of the Protestant succession had not only hardened the hearts of party men, but had led many indifferent persons, anxious only for the security of the church, to a forgetfulness of the laws of humanity, and the precepts of the christian religion. The Queen, in her answer, spoke of groundless fears, and jealousies which *had been industriously promoted* ; said she did not at that time see any occasion for such a proclamation, but whenever she should judge it necessary, she would give orders for having one issued. This answer caused a warm debate in the House of Lords. The ministerial peers moved to thank the Queen in terms similar to those she had used ; a discussion took place on the words 'and industriously' applied to the fears and jealousies said by the Queen to be promoted. The debate lasted four hours, and on a division the ministry carried the question only by two proxies ; the absence of the Duke of Rutland, who was at Newmarket with

* The Journals of the House of Lords give the words, "in case he should land," &c. as part of the address reported by the committee. I have left the text as it stands on the authority of all the historians of the time, but I am aware some may consider the journals as a better guide than them all.

1714. a proxy in his pocket, and of the Duke of Grafton, who had been sent for to attend his duchess, gave this scanty triumph to the minister. On this occasion, of sixteen bishops present, only two voted with the court.

The opposition of the Whig party was vigilant and unremitting. An address to thank the Queen for the peace was carried, after warm debates in both houses, and by a majority of only thirteen in the Lords. Addresses were voted to the Queen to intercede for the Catalans, and received with civil but fruitless answers. Sir Patrick Lawless, who had served the Pretender, having come to England with a commission from Philip of Spain, strong resolutions were voted in the House of Lords against receiving, as minister from another country, or admitting to any office, civil or military, in our own, any person who had borne arms against the Queen, not included in the capitulation of Limerick.

It is supposed that the scheme of Bolingbroke, to overturn the Treasurer and secure his party, in the event of the Queen's death, led to the schism bill, which was at this time brought into the House of Lords. This bill may, at all events, serve to show the principles, the views, and the intentions of the Tory party, and thereby give a notion of what might have been expected from them, had

they succeeded in keeping the government of the state in their own hands during the succeeding reign. The schism bill was introduced by Sir William Wyndham, one of the chief ornaments of their party. Its object was to prevent education by dissenters, in any way ; and it went to prohibit them from keeping schools, even for their own children. The bill was warmly opposed in the Commons by Mr. Hampden, Mr. Walpole, Mr. Lechmere, Sir Peter King, and Sir Joseph Jekyll. Mr. Stanhope, in particular, said, with justice and liberality, that such a bill could only encourage foreign education, which he thought so great an evil that he would gladly consent to a law to allow the Papists to keep schools, instead of driving them abroad to imbibe foreign manners and foreign habits. In the House of Lords this bill met with still warmer opposition. Lord Halifax urged, “that this bill evidently struck at the toleration which the Queen had promised to maintain. That Queen Elizabeth by her protection of the reformed Walloons, who fled from the Spanish inquisition, had settled here the woollen manufacture, the best branch of the national trade. That the protection which King William and Queen Mary had afforded to the French refugees had proved no less advantageous to Great Britain. He entreated the house to beware of the example of Charles the First, who

1714.

Schism
Bill.

1714. by his persecution of dissenters had brought ruin on himself and the nation." Lord Townshend to the same purpose declared, that having lived long in Holland he had observed, that the wealth and strength of that commonwealth arose in great part from the protection afforded to all religious sects. Lord Cowper remarked, that in many country towns reading, writing, and grammar schools were chiefly supported by the dissenters; so that the suppression of these schools would, in some places, suppress the reading of the holy Scriptures. To all this it was only answered, that the church was in danger from the growth of schismatics, and that the dissenters had made this bill necessary, by drawing the children of churchmen to their schools and academies, as a means of propagating their opinions. Such was the argument by which a bishop of London endeavoured to support a persecution, which the vigilance of his order ought to have rendered as unnecessary as it was odious. A clause was proposed to allow the dissenters to have schools for the children of their own persuasion, but Lord Bolingbroke and the Chancellor succeeded in rejecting it, upon a division. Some other clauses had better success, particularly one which allowed the dissenters to have school-mistresses to teach their children, and another, by which the conviction was to take place in the ordinary courts

of justice, instead of by summary process before a magistrate, as at first proposed. The bill passed by a majority of 77 to 72, and the amendments were agreed to in the Commons by a majority of 168 to 98. Several bishops, with a liberality which does them honour, concurred in a protest against passing this bill. 1714.

While these discussions were going on in parliament the Jacobite emissaries were not idle, and Lord Wharton received information that two Irish officers, of the name of Kelly, were enlisting men for the Pretender, in London and Westminster. He immediately repaired to Chief Justice Parker with evidence on this subject, and procured a warrant for apprehending the two offenders; both were taken, one of them with a pass from Lord Middleton, Secretary of State to the Pretender, in his pocket. This event threw the nation into a ferment, and the Queen, unable to stem the torrent, issued a proclamation offering 5000*l.* for apprehending the Pretender, in case he should land, or attempt to land, in England. It is said that Oxford was not privy to the intention of proposing in council this proclamation, and even declared that he should oppose such a step. However this may be, the Commons took up the affair with ardour, and promised, by an address, to aid the Queen with a reward of 100,000*l.* to attain the

Enlisting
men for the
Pretender.

1714. object of the proclamation: a warmth of zeal with which her Majesty would willingly have dispensed! In the Lords, on the motion of Lord Nottingham, an address was voted, thanking the Queen for her proclamation, desiring that she would enter into a guaranty for the Protestant succession with the Emperor* and King of Prussia; that she would offer a reward for apprehending any person enlisting men for the Pretender, and that she would cause all papists and non-jurers to be disarmed. Lord Bolingbroke coming into the house just after this address had been voted, said there was a more effectual way than any that had been proposed to exclude the Pretender, and that was by a bill, making it high treason to enlist men in his service. Lord Halifax, and other lords in opposition, said that such a bill was needless, as the Pretender and his adherents were all guilty of high treason. They however permitted the bill to be brought in, and then pointing out that the greatest danger of all arose from the assistance of France, they succeeded in converting the measure into a law, making it high treason “to list, or be listed to serve any foreign prince, state, or potentate, without a licence under the sign manual of her Majesty, her heirs,

* The Emperor about this time was engaged in a negotiation for marrying an Archduchess, his niece, to the Pretender.—See Macpherson.

or successors." The act was to continue in force 1714.
three years.

After this a debate took place on the trade with the Spanish colonies. By the treaty of peace the Queen had reserved to herself a fourth part of the Assiento contract, and it was suspected that she had bestowed it on Lord Bolingbroke, Lady Masham, and Mr. Arthur Moore, a friend and agent of Lord Bolingbroke. The suspicions on this subject were quickened by the complaints of the merchants on the third, fifth, and eighth articles of the treaty of commerce with Spain, and the Lords, influenced by these murmurs, addressed the Queen to know who had advised her to sign the treaty. The Queen replied generally, that she understood the explanatory articles were not detrimental to the trade of her subjects, and had therefore permitted them to be ratified. This unsatisfactory answer led to an enquiry upon the part of the Lords, and Mr. Moore himself was examined at the bar. The enquiry, however, was not continued that night, and for a reason which will sound curiously in our ears, namely, that the house had already sate till nine in the evening. For in those days men of business rose early in the morning, and never imagined that midnight was the best hour for discussing the affairs of the nation. On the next day, the Queen came to the House July 9.

Treaty of
commerce
with Spain.

1714. of Peers, and put an end to the session. In this, the last speech she ever made from the throne, she said, “ My chief concern is to preserve to you, and to your posterity, our holy religion, and the liberty of my subjects, and to secure the present and future tranquillity of my kingdoms. But I must tell you plainly, that these desirable ends can never be attained unless you bring the same dispositions on your parts; unless all groundless jealousies, which create and foment divisions amongst you, be laid aside: and unless you show the same regard for my just prerogative, and for the honour of my government, as I have always expressed for the rights of my people.”

Result
of the
Session.

Upon the whole, the result of this session was to give confidence to the Whig party, and shake the tenure of the administration. A large body of the Tories, and nearly the whole bench of Bishops, had joined in many of the motions proceeding from the opposition, and so strong an excitement had been kept up in the country, that it was difficult for the Jacobites to prepare any measure for what they called the restoration, without producing a popular sally, which would have shattered and destroyed their whole fabric. Let us now turn to the secret history of this period, for the explanation and developement of the events which

have preceded, and those which are to follow the 1712-14.
point of time at which we stand.

The Tory party of this period may be considered as divided into three separate bodies. The first consisted of Jacobites more or less declared, more or less attached to the cause of the Pretender. The second consisted of men divided in their affections between church and king; unwilling to hurt the church by admitting a Roman Catholic prince, but perhaps still more averse to appear in arms against him, whom they considered as their lawful hereditary sovereign. The third body was composed of the friends of the established church, who combined Tory principles of government with a steadfast attachment to the Protestant succession.

Divisions
of the Tory
party.

Of these three bodies, it seems from all the evidence we can collect, that the first was the weakest, and the second by far the strongest. Men well able to judge were of opinion, that nine out of ten, or even a greater proportion, of the Tories, though by no means ready to plot for the Pretender, would not oppose him if he came supported by a sufficient body of French troops, and would never be brought to take the field against the legitimate heir of the Monarchy. Lord Guildford, a Tory of this kind, speaking to Lord Cowper as an intimate private friend, of the ru-

mours current concerning the Pretender, told him he knew nothing of a design formed of bringing him in, and did not believe there was any, "but I frankly acknowledge," he continued, "that if matters go any length, the greatest part of us Tories will willingly submit, while you Whigs will perhaps be fools enough to expose your country to a civil war, and to be laid waste by the French on the one hand, and the Germans on the other."* Tories of this stamp reposed in the confidence that if events rendered it necessary, they could make laws sufficiently strong to secure their religion under a Roman Catholic prince.

Schemes of
the Jaco-
bites.

While this body was the most numerous, that of the Jacobites was the most active. Countenanced in some degree by the double-minded policy of Harley, they omitted no means to win the people by the conviction of their right, and to awe them with a notion of their strength. A book was published by Dr. Bedford asserting hereditary right, or legitimacy, against all other titles; the author was discovered, and condemned by the court of Queen's Bench to be imprisoned three years, and to be brought into court with a paper on his head denoting his offence; but the ignominious part of the punishment was remitted by

* Hanover Papers. Kreyenberg to Robethon, March 13, 1714.

an order signed by the secretary of state.* Of the Scotch peers all but two were Jacobites, and of the Scotch members of the House of Commons, a majority were supposed to be attached to the same interest. The friends of the Stuarts, as they saw the decline of the Queen's health, became at once more busy in their secret intrigues, and more bold in their public language; the health of the Pretender was frequently toasted, and his name mentioned with sympathy and respect. All this time the Chevalier himself was in Lorraine, from whence he could reach England in a very few days. His advisers were active in planning schemes for his landing; some proposed that he should go to Scotland, and put himself at the head of his faithful adherents in that country, while the Duke of Berwick wished that he should come secretly to London, and be introduced by Queen Anne to the Parliament as her successor.† Had the ministry

* Other pamphlets of the same kind are mentioned by historians; two of them, written by Mr. Leslie, are in the Somers Papers. There is a curious diversity on this subject between Lord Stair and Dr. Swift; both writing when the events were fresh in their memory, and to persons acquainted with the facts. Dr. Swift affirms that no books or pamphlets appeared against the Hanover succession, and Lord Stair declares they were published in great numbers. After this, be positive of historical facts!

† Mem. de Berwick.

1714. possessed the decision and sense of Berwick, with his attachment to the Pretender's cause, they would probably have adopted this bold scheme; and a friend of liberty, when he reflects on the feelings of the Queen, the prejudices of the landed gentlemen, and the loyalty of the mob, must tremble at what might have been the result.

Measures
of the
Whigs.

While these things were acting or preparing among the Jacobites, the Whigs bent the whole force of their party to their darling object of securing the Protestant succession. With this view, their chief endeavour was to separate the different bodies of Tories more completely from one another, and to hinder the main body from joining the faction of the Stuarts. Several means were open to them for this purpose. One of the most obvious and effectual, was to bring the Electoral Prince of Hanover to England, and procure for him an establishment suited to his station. The Act of Settlement gave him this advantage over his competitor, that he might come to London without contradiction, and prepare openly his measures for securing the throne after the death of the reigning sovereign. His presence could not fail to give him the very strength, of which as a stranger at a distance, he was most in want, and the apathy of the Tories would be engaged on his side, when he should appear as the possessor, and his rival as the

invader of the kingdom. To this object accord- 1714.
ingly the Whigs directed all their efforts, and were
ably assisted by several powerful letters of the
Duke of Marlborough, who represented to his
sovereign, that the Electoral Prince, being only
the third in succession, his coming could give no
just offence to her. The Queen, however, while
she assumed an appearance of cordiality towards
the Electoral family, expressed the strongest aver-
sion to the Prince's coming to England; and Har-
ley said, that such a measure would be placing her
coffin before her eyes. Yet in order still further
to persuade the House of Hanover of his mistress's
regard for their persons, and his own attachment
to their interests, Oxford sent his cousin, Mr.
Thomas Harley, on a mission to the Electoral
Court. He seems to have been charged, indeed, Feb. to
with little else than compliments, and empty assur- May 1714.
ances of regard; so that the government of Han-
over, far from being satisfied with his mission,
placed in his hands on his departure a strong me-
morial, praying the Queen to settle some one of
the Electoral family in England, and to insist on
the removal of the Pretender from Lorraine. But
although the Princess Sophia and the Elector were
willing to ask for these favours from the Queen,
nothing could induce them to send the Electoral
Prince to England without obtaining her consent.

April,
1714.
Writ of
the Duke
of Cam-
bridge.

A step indeed was taken which seemed likely to be of importance: Baron Schutz, who was sent to England as Hanoverian Envoy, after a consultation with the Whigs, demanded of the Chancellor a writ for the Electoral Prince, as Duke of Cambridge. The Chancellor declined giving an immediate answer: however, after a council held the same night, the writ was made out as required. But the Queen was so angry with the Hanoverian Envoy for this abrupt demand, that he never was allowed to see her, and was speedily both recalled and disavowed. It has been said, that a few days after this step, it was debated in council, whether or no the Queen should invite the Electoral Prince to England; that Harley and the Chancellor were in favour of such a measure, but that it was overruled by Bolingbroke. This report, however, does not seem entitled to credit.

In the mean time Mr. Molyneaux, who had been sent by Marlborough to Hanover, and recommended as being “a man of quality, who had very large possessions in Ireland, but principally as a man of parts and of merit, with whose good principles he was well acquainted,” wrote to the Duchess of Marlborough, that the article, praying the Queen that some one of the Electoral family might go to England, was carried with great difficulty in the Hanoverian council; that it was the

only step which he believed would be made to support the demand of the Prince's writ; and that he was more amazed at the difficulties the succession met with at Hanover, than at those it encountered in London. Indeed, considering the ambition of mankind, there is nothing more extraordinary, than the negligence with which they sometimes let slip the fairest opportunities of gratifying their desires. That the Electoral Prince of Hanover should not at this time have gone to England, is as singular an instance of imprudent omission, as that Lewis the Fourteenth should not have prevented the expedition of William the Third to England; and had the event been otherwise than it was, would not have been less remarked by historians.

1714.

Soon after the mission of Mr. Harley to Hanover, the Electress Sophia died, in the 84th year of her age. Her death is supposed to have been accelerated by some letters of the Queen addressed to her and the Elector, in which the strongest, not to say harshest terms, were used, in resentment of the demand of the writ of the Duke of Cambridge, and in opposition to the projected journey of the Prince to England. The Electress Sophia seems to have been a virtuous and respected Princess, firmly attached to her religion, but so much of a Tory in politicks, as to have

Death of
the Prin-
cess Sophia.

1714. somewhat embarrassed the measures and counsels of her son.

The Whigs, in the mean time, had not been idle in endeavouring to obtain other securities for the succession. Marlborough procured the appointment of commander of the forces, with the blanks to be filled up in case of the Queen's demise. Cadogan, his friend and pupil, kept a watchful eye on the garrison of Dunkirk, prepared on the first warning to take possession of the Tower of London, and resolved to confine in it the persons suspected of an attachment to the Pretender. The French refugee officers were consulted, and professed themselves zealous in favour of the House of Hanover. The chiefs of the Whig party in England, Somers, Halifax, Sunderland, Cowper, and Wharton attempted, by every means in their power, to form an administration favourable to the Hanover succession. For this purpose they proposed that Nottingham, Anglesey, and other Tories attached to the Protestant line, should, if their efforts in Parliament were successful, form an administration, from which all the Whigs should be excluded. This proposal shows that their efforts were at this time directed to the security of the succession established by Parliament, in preference to every other interest or consideration. The ambiguous conduct of the

House of Lords, however, and the triumphant 1714.
ministerial majority of the House of Commons,
prevented this attempt from being attended with
success.

While, however, the Whigs were thus appa-
rently defeated in many of their objects, it hap-
pened, as it so frequently does in the affairs of the
world, that what fortune refused to give to them
directly, in the immediate success of their mea-
sures, she bestowed upon them in the shape of
unskilful enemies and divided opponents. Boling-
broke, writing a confidential letter to the Earl of
Strafford this spring, says, “ In both Houses there
are the best dispositions I ever saw; but I am
sorry to tell you that these dispositions are unim-
proved; the Whigs pursue their plan with good
order and in concert. The Tories stand at gaze,
and expect the court should regulate their con-
duct and lead them on; and the court seems in a
lethargy. Nothing, you see, can come of this, but
what would be at once the greatest absurdity, and
the greatest misfortune. The minority, and that
minority unpopular, must get the better of the
majority, who have the sense of the nation on their
side. All that can be done, is doing, to prevail
upon our friend, my Lord Treasurer, to alter his
measures, to renew a confidence with the Tories,
and a spirit in them, and to give a regular motion

Conduct of
the Minis-
try.

1714. to all the wheels of government. I am sanguine enough to hope that we shall prevail. Indeed, it would be pity to lose by management, what none can wrest by force out of our hands.”*

The misconduct of Oxford, and the dissensions which continued to increase between the two Ministers, became more and more marked. Lady Masham, who had been the first cause of the rise of Harley, was likewise the chief instrument of his fall. During the early part of the quarrels between Oxford and Bolingbroke, she had, as I have related, strongly embraced the cause of the former, but now her inclinations were totally changed. The first occasion upon which Harley had offended her, was his refusal to pay a demand of upwards of 28,000*l.* for arms and merchandize, said to be sent to Canada. St. John interfered and procured the Queen’s order for the payment; but it was afterwards discovered that the public were cheated of about 20,000*l.* on that occasion, great part of which, no doubt, went into the pockets of the favourite.† Another dispute arose on the subject of the fourth part of the Assiento contract: Lady Masham, whose rapacity seems to have been equal to her cunning and ingratitude,

* Bolingbroke’s Correspondence.

† Lord Treasurer Oxford’s letter to the Queen. Swift’s Enquiry.

insisted upon receiving a large per centage on the Queen's share, and was opposed by the Treasurer. These disputes, which do honour to Harley, gave strength to Bolingbroke. He had at the same time brought Lord Chancellor Harcourt to his side; Sir William Wyndham, and the principal Tories, ranged themselves under his banner; and every thing foretold his approaching victory over his opponent.

In the interval, however, while Harley still retained some influence over the mind of his mistress, and still stood at the helm of the treasury, the vessel of the state, guided by so unsteady a hand, pursued a wavering and uncertain course. Imagining that his opponent was attached to the court of the Pretender, Oxford endeavoured to secure an interest with the Hanoverian family, and their supporters, the Whigs. When he gave Mr. Harley a mission to Hanover, he, at the same time, sent a message to Lord Halifax, intimating that he was sure he would be glad to hear of the step he was taking. He never spoke, however, of this message afterwards; and Mr. Harley, though he visited Lord Halifax, said not a word on the subject of Hanover; but, when the Queen's health grew worse, Oxford again made advances to the Whig lords: a conduct at once foolish and contemptible.

While this fluctuation was going on in the state,

1714. the hesitating policy of Harley was no less observable in the government of the military force. The army, resenting the treatment it had met with towards the end of the war, and the stop which had been put to its progress in the career of victory, had frequently shown its dislike to the Tory ministry, and its attachment to the Protestant succession. Even so early as the year 1710, Generals Meredith, Macartney, and Honeywood had been superseded, on the charge of having drunk as a toast, "Confusion to the New Ministry." Some other officers were afterwards punished for an indiscreet manifestation of the same feelings. Sir Richard Temple, who had served with great distinction during the war, was discharged from the Queen's service, and had his regiment taken from him, without any other cause alleged than that the Queen had no further occasion for his service. Lieut.-Colonel Coote was deprived of his company of the Guards, for drinking the health of the Elector of Hanover, and expressing, with marked violence, his dislike to Lord Oxford: General Cadogan was forced to sell his regiment: the Duke of Argyle, the Earl of Stair, and General Davenport lost their regiments, and were ordered to leave the army. Black lists were said to be made of every regiment, according to which the army was to be purged. Lieut.-Colonel

Sidney, brother to the Earl of Leicester, and several other captains of the foot-guards, were ordered to sell their companies; officers less liberal in politics were named to succeed them.* 1714.

But, although these commissions were to be sold considerably below their usual price, the gentlemen named in the room of those to be displaced, had not the money at hand, and the Treasurer was asked to advance 10,000*l.* for this necessary service. After several delays, however, he positively refused, and said he did not see why he was to assist in advancing the ends of his enemies.† Thus, in consequence of the distractions of the ministry, no firm resolution of any kind was taken. The temper of the army was irritated, without its composition being changed; and the country was alarmed, without any formidable preparations having been made to introduce the Pretender. Lord Peterborough, who had been sent on a foreign mission, being asked, when abroad, what was the state of the court and councils of his country, replied, that he really could not tell, as he had been out of England a fortnight; and Swift, to the same purport, declares that no system of policy was acted upon for four days together.

The dissensions of the ministry had been openly

* Tindal. Hardwicke Papers. Lord Stair's Memorial.
Hanover Papers.

† Swift's Enquiry.

1714. revealed to the world at the end of the session of parliament, in the discussions relative to the three explanatory articles of the treaty of commerce with Spain. While Bolingbroke put forth all his vigour in their defence, Harley allowed that they might be altered, and by his lukewarm apologies encouraged the attacks of the opposition. This conduct gave fresh provocation to his colleagues, while, on the other hand, the cabals against him were still further encouraged by the Jacobites. The Duke of Berwick, in particular, sent over to the Duke of Ormond and his friends, the strongest representations against the Treasurer, showing them likewise in the clearest manner, that they and their adherents were utterly ruined, if they did not do all in their power to restore the Stuarts. Convinced of the truth of what he said, they employed Lady Masham to exert all her influence against the falling minister.* Thus impelled on all sides, the Queen determined to deprive him of the white staff, and to make no prime minister in his room, vainly imagining that in spite of her broken health, and imperfect understanding, she should be able to retain all the power of the state in her own person.† Before his dismissal, however, a violent scene occurred in

Dismissal
of Oxford.

* Mem. de Berwick, 2, p. 206.

† Erasmus Lewis to Dr. Swift, July 6, 1714.

her presence, between Lady Masham and Lord 1714.
 Oxford, when the latter declared, “ that he had
 been abused by lies and misrepresentations, and
 that he would leave some people as low as he
 found them.” On the other hand, Lady Masham
 said to Harley in her own house, “ You never did
 the Queen any service, nor are you capable of
 doing her any;” yet, strange to relate, he supped
 with her that same evening in company with Lord
 Bolingbroke. Even at this decisive moment, he is
 accused by his enemies of having been more in-
 tent upon obtaining the Cavendish estate for Lord
 Harley, who had lately married Lady Henrietta
 Pelham, than upon public affairs. At length, the July 27.
 Queen took the staff of Treasurer from him, and
 told the Council, that her reasons for parting with
 him were, that he neglected all business; that he
 was seldom to be understood; that when he did
 explain himself, she could not depend upon the
 truth of what he said; that he never came to her
 at the time she appointed; and that he behaved
 himself towards her with bad manners, indecency,
 and disrespect. Erasmus Lewis, Lord Oxford’s
 secretary, who writes an account of these charges,
 in a letter to Swift, adds a confession of their truth
 in the words, “ *pudet hæc opprobria nobis.*” *

Thus fell Lord Oxford, after six years of power,

* Swift’s Correspondence.

1714. during which time, although neither thwarted by hostile influence from the throne at home, nor by misfortune abroad, he contrived to break up a powerful party, of which he was the leader, and to alienate, at once, his sovereign, his friends, the adherents of the Pretender, and those of the House of Hanover. In troubled times, as in a boat on a stormy sea, the best chance of safety is to steer either against the waves or with them; he who attempts to take them sideways, will probably perish in the ocean. Thus it was with the power and reputation of Harley.

The Lord Treasurer being thus dismissed, the next concern was, how his place was to be filled up. It appears, from what we can learn, that Bolingbroke was to retain the post which he held, with the hope, amounting almost to a certainty, that he should inherit the power of Oxford. The Treasury was to be put into commission: Sir William Wyndham to be First Lord, with the post of Chancellor of the Exchequer; Lord Strafford was to be at the head of the Admiralty; Lord Marr, Secretary of State for Scotland; and Bishop Atterbury, Lord Privy Seal.

Intentions
of Boling-
broke.

It has been a matter of speculation, whether Bolingbroke intended to restore the Pretender. Before discussing this question, it will be useful to record the few facts that have been preserved. In

his public and private correspondence, from his 1714.
entering into office to the time of which we speak,
there are but one or two phrases to be found,
which imply any concern in the favour of the Pre-
tender;* none that pledge him to forward the
object of the Jacobites. The day after Oxford's
dismissal, he gave a dinner to Stanhope, Walpole,
and many others of the Whig party, whom he
assured of his good intentions in favour of the
Hanover succession; but when the Whigs de-
manded, as a proof of his sincerity, that he would
obtain the removal of the Pretender from Lorraine,
he told them that he could never get the consent of
the Queen to what she deemed the banishment of
her brother. The same evening Mr. John Drum-
mond was ordered to be in readiness, at Kensing-
ton, to carry dispatches to Hanover. One of the
intimate friends of Lord Bolingbroke told Carte,
the historian, that these dispatches were intended
to convey the assurance of Bolingbroke's attach-
ment to the Court of Hanover; that Bolingbroke
and Lord Harcourt had determined between them,
to maintain the Protestant succession, and to send
the Duke of Ormond, the only pledged Jacobite

* In a letter to the Duke d'Aumont he says, "Le Chevalier Wyndham se fera un plaisir d'être util au nommé Jacques, quand il reviendra de son élection." 15 Sept. 1713.
Correspondence.

1714. among them, to Ireland, in a kind of honourable banishment.*

Although the light derived from these facts is extremely feeble, yet I am inclined to infer from them, and from the known dispositions of Bolingbroke, that he was far from having decided in his own mind, upon the recal of the exiled family; had he done so, some traces of it would surely have been discernible in his correspondence. It must be recollected, likewise, that Bolingbroke was not the slave of any prejudice; his sole view was to retain power for himself and his party. If it were possible then, for him to convince the House of Hanover of his attachment to their interests, it is most likely he would have preferred maintaining the law of Parliament, and respecting the religious feelings of the people, to the hazardous attempt of restoring a proscribed Prince, whose confidence he did not enjoy, assisted only by the lukewarm affections of the Queen, and the doubtful inclinations of the Tories. It seems probable therefore, that he would have offered his services to the House of Hanover, and that only, in case of their being

* Stuart Papers. Mr. Coxe infers the participation of Bolingbroke in the intrigues of the Jacobites from the Memoirs of Berwick. Berwick expresses his hopes from Lord Bolingbroke's ministry, but I do not find that he mentions any correspondence with him till his flight to France.

neglected or rejected there, would he have pursued, 1714.
 with the ardour and vigour that were natural to him, the project of confirming his own power, by bringing in a King, who would owe the Crown to his exertions. This view is countenanced by the following expressions used by him in a letter to Lord Strafford, in March, 1714. “Our laws, our oaths, a just concern for our religion and liberty, will keep the nation firm and steady in their adherence to a Protestant, and in their opposition to a Popish Prince. But if a pretended danger of the succession shall be made use of, to introduce foreign forces amongst us, the object of men’s fears may come in time to be changed. Britain must not, on any account, be made the theatre of confusion: our Crown has been given, but our country must not be conquered,” &c.* In this passage his language somewhat resembles that of Lord Dartmouth, which has been already quoted.

His projects however, whatever they may have been, were destined to be baffled. The dispute between the ministers, and a council which sate afterwards, and lasted till two o’clock in the morning, produced a visible disorder in the Queen’s health. She said to one of her physicians that “she should not outlive it.” In fact, the agitation of her spirits, according to the opinion of Dr.

Death of
the Queen.

* Corresp. March 23d, 1714.

1714. Shadwell, prevented the discharge of an imposthume in her leg, and was thus the immediate cause of her death. On the morning of the 29th she was seized with a fit of apoplexy, from which she never recovered. The Committee of the Privy Council, called the Cabinet, were sitting to consult upon this new aspect of affairs, when the Dukes of Somerset and Argyll entered the council chamber without a summons. Bolingbroke was startled at their appearance, but the Duke of Shrewsbury, who presided at the board, thanked them for their attendance, and desired them to take their places. They immediately moved for an examination of the physicians, who forthwith attended, and pronounced the Queen to be in great danger. Upon this, Somerset and Argyll urged the necessity of filling up the place of Lord Treasurer: the Duke of Shrewsbury being proposed, was unanimously agreed to, and the Queen, in an interval when she possessed her senses, was informed of the recommendation, and willingly assented to it. Thus the Duke of Shrewsbury was for a short time possessed of three of the highest offices of the kingdom: he was at once Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, Lord Chamberlain, and Lord Treasurer. But the Queen's days were numbered. She expired on Sunday the first of August, 1714. Bolingbroke, in a letter to Swift, of the 3rd, says, "The Earl

of Oxford was removed on Tuesday; the Queen 1714.
died on Sunday. What a world is this, and how
does fortune banter us!"

It would be a waste of time to attempt to give Her cha-
in detail the character of Queen Anne; it is im-
possible either to praise or to censure her greatly, racter.
without falling into exaggeration. Let us then
content ourselves with the character which Marl-
borough, who had known her long and well, gave
of her, at the courts both of Hanover and St.
Germain's, that she was "a good sort of woman."
She was, in fact, an affectionate wife, a kind mother,
a charitable and pious Queen. She loved to have
her own way, and yet, from weakness of under-
standing, always fell under the government of one
favourite or another. Her preferences and dis-
likes, adopted from little circumstances, and pal-
try motives, were, however, the stars which ruled
the destinies of Europe. It was because she fondly
doated on the Duchess of Marlborough, that her
reign is adorned by the glories of Blenheim
and Ramillies; it was because Mrs. Masham, by
a chambermaid's intrigue, supplanted her benefac-
tress, that a stop was put to the war which ravaged
the continent; it was in great part owing to the
influence of the Duchess of Somerset, another fa-
vourite lady, that the Queen did not attempt to
recall her brother. Thus it is, that "a good sort

1714. of woman," moved by the most ordinary passions, and, in fact, consulting only her own ease and comfort, may change at pleasure the fortunes of the world.

The bold measure of the Dukes of Somerset and Argyll, and the disheartened state of Bolingbroke and his friends, made the succession of the House of Hanover, so long the subject of doubt and speculation, easy and undisturbed. Before the Queen died, the Privy Counsellors being generally summoned, Somers, and many other Whigs had hastened to attend the Council. As soon as Anne expired, George the First was proclaimed King, with the usual solemnities, in London and Westminster; the same ceremony took place in Dublin and Edinburgh, and with the exception of an anonymous letter received by the Mayor of Oxford, desiring him to proclaim the Pretender, there was not even a breath of opposition. Agreeably to the provisions of the Regency bill, the seven great Officers of State, together with eighteen Peers, named in an instrument signed by the Elector of Hanover, took upon themselves the administration of the kingdom; and the Earl of Dorset was dispatched to Hanover, to inform the new King of his accession.*

George the
First pro-
claimed.

* The Great Officers of State were, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Lord Chancellor, Lord President, Lord Privy

Thus was accomplished the great work of the 1714. Hanover succession. If we reflect, how much attached the people of England are to their Kings; the sisterly affection of Queen Anne, and her influence over the nation; the general dislike of a German connexion, and the indifference or tardiness of the House of Hanover itself in taking advantage of opportunities as they arose, the elevation of George the First to the throne of these realms, must strike us as a very extraordinary event. In some respects it is even more wonderful than the Revolution of 1688. The son of James the Second, instead of having roused the anger of the nation, like his father, was, on the contrary, an object of pity; he appeared to them in the character of a Prince, proscribed for no other crime but his descent from the royal blood of England, and his natural ambition to fill the throne of his ancestors. On the other hand, the character of the Elector of Hanover was not calculated to warm his partisans, or conciliate the affections of the people he aspired to govern.

Seal, First Lord of the Admiralty, Lord Treasurer, Lord Chief Justice. The principal Peers were, the Dukes of Shrewsbury, Somerset, Devonshire, Argyll; the Earls of Anglesey, Carlisle, Nottingham, Orford; Lords Townshend, Halifax, and Cowper.

1714.
Character
of George
the First.

George the First was, in person, about a middle size ; his countenance was deficient in expression, his dress was plain, he could not speak English. His habits of life were thoroughly German, and at the mature age of fifty-four no change in this respect could reasonably be expected. His manners were cold and reserved ; he not only did not court, but he seemed to repel the advances of his new subjects. He was naturally fond of the obscurity of a private station ; so much so, that when he went to the play, he concealed himself in the box of the maids of honour, behind his mistress and her niece. He had no taste for letters or the arts. His better qualities were justice, frugality, and punctuality in business ; virtues rather of a solid than a shining nature, and which, far from captivating the favour of the multitude, are apt to make their possessor unpopular. For there are always a vast number who require partiality to themselves, rather than a just consideration for their country : nor is there any quality with which mankind in general sympathize so little as very strict economy ; a virtue which indeed is often selfish in a private person, but always meritorious in a king. So far did the Elector of Hanover carry his parsimony, that he would raise no troops to secure his succession ; and the principal Whigs were obliged to advance from their own purses the sums ne-

cessary to gain some ignoble men of rank, whom nothing else could induce to join them. 1714.

If we reflect on the means by which this great event was brought about, we shall see, it was almost entirely effected by skilful management on the one side, and the want of it on the other. The perpetual activity of the Whigs, their vigorous appeals to the nation, and their admirable party discipline, made it extremely difficult for the Jacobites to form any extensive combination, or to prepare the mind of the nation for the change they meditated. On the other hand, the indecision and insincerity of Harley broke his followers into divisions, insomuch that, after four years of power, the Tory party was declared, by one of its leaders, to be dissolved.* Perhaps there never was an instance which so clearly demonstrated the importance of political union, and the value of a few able chiefs. Circumstances, it is true, favoured their efforts; but when men act with consummate skill, fortune seldom fails to befriend them: the reason of which is, perhaps, that they make the most of every happy trifle, and that on the other hand it requires a long continuance of untoward events to defeat them.

Reflections
on the
Hanover
succession.

It may be asked, however, whether the object

Bolingbroke. See Swift's Correspondence.

1714. were worth the hazard, at which it was procured ; whether the religion and liberties of England might not have been equally well secured, by good laws, under the hereditary descendant of the Stuarts ; and whether it were wise and prudent to incur the risk of civil war, and the certainty of long and bitter dissension, in order to exclude one royal family and admit another ? Surely, it may be said, if your limitations on monarchy are of any real value, they must be good to bind one king as well as another ; as efficient for preventing a Stuart from invading our religion, as for preventing a Brunswick from overturning our political constitution.

To these objections a short answer might be given, by appealing to experience and referring to the reign of James the Second. The securities enacted by the jealousy of the Parliament, celebrated for their prosecution of the Popish plot, and their votes on the Exclusion bill, were then found of little avail against a Prince who was determined to throw prerogative into the scale against law. But, even without quoting this decisive experiment, I think it may be shown, that the admission of the Son of James the Second could not fail to be attended with the greatest perils and misfortunes.

If we look, in the first place, to religion, it is

evident that a bigoted Roman Catholic King, and a zealous Protestant people, could hardly fail to disagree. It is easy for the Prince to promise that he will do nothing against the security of the Protestant church, but even if his professions are sincere, it is almost impossible, when the minds of men are in a state of irritation, to agree in practice on the definition of these words. The slightest alleviation of the sufferings of the Roman Catholics, the smallest relaxation of the penal code, would be considered by a jealous people, as the commencement of a scheme to restore the supremacy of the Pope. Besides, it must be considered that, the Pretender was not only a Roman Catholic, but a bigoted Papist; he had been bred up by political priests, and priestly politicians, in a country where Protestants had been hunted down, and slaughtered like wild beasts. There cannot be a greater difference between one civilized man and another, than between such a bigot as this, and a mild tolerant Roman Catholic. The very professions of liberality which came from the Pretender, flowed from the poisoned sources of jesuitical counsel.

1714.

In a political view, the danger of disagreement was no less imminent; and the chance of the triumph of the restored King over the nation, much greater. Calculate, as we may, on the ad-

1714. vantages of limited monarchy, it is impossible to carry on the machinery of such a government with an unwilling sovereign. A chief magistrate, invested with the power of the sword, the distribution of all honours and rewards, and the choice of foreign alliances, may always disturb the execution of the laws, and derange the operation of the wisest constitution. Let us suppose, for instance, that James the Third had claimed the dispensing power; that the Parliament had resisted, and that he had called in a French army to support his authority. What check could then have been put in force against him? To stop the supplies? That would have been to disarm the country, at the moment when its strength was required against a foreign enemy. To impeach the Ministers? the King would have dissolved the Parliament, and never have called another till he had reduced the people to passive obedience under his sway. It is necessary, therefore, for the working of a limited monarchy, that the King should himself be willing to be limited, and unless he is so, the machinery must soon stop of itself. But, in order to have a king, with so moderate a disposition, the best, if not the only security is, that he should reign by a national, and not a personal title. For the King, who inherits an ancient crown, from a race of sovereigns pretending to be absolute, will always

be uneasy till he obtain the power which was 1714.
claimed by his ancestors, and the safeguards for
the people's liberties will ever be considered by
him, as encroachments on his right. But he who
is placed on the throne, by the summons of
the people, cannot complain that he is defrauded
of his lawful power, for it is only from the will
of the nation that he derives any power what-
ever; he cannot say that his authority is incom-
plete, because all that he has is the free gift
of his subjects. Let us add to this, that he is
withheld from attempting to become absolute by
the existence of a Pretender, whose claim, in this
respect, is better grounded than his, and who is
only excluded because the nation will not submit
to arbitrary power, in any king whatsoever. The
first attempt, on his part, therefore, to revive an
exorbitant authority, would be followed by the
recal of a family whose ancient guilt would be
forgotten, in comparison with his more recent
offence. Besides this, however, such an attempt
is rendered almost impossible, at least for a long
time, by the want of any party or set of men in
the nation, capable of supporting his pretensions.
For those who are in favour of unlimited authority,
would give it to another person, and those who
are in favour of his person are against an unlimited
authority. Thus, the sovereign is obliged, ulti-

1714. mately, to confide in those who brought him in, but brought him in with conditions; and the only party zealous in supporting his title, is at the same time, the most concerned in placing checks upon his prerogative.

The Lords
Justices.

The Lords Justices named by the new King, were chiefly Whigs, with the addition of those Tory peers who had appeared the most zealous for the succession. Yet it excited some surprise, to find that neither Somers, Marlborough, or Sunderland were in the list. The reasons of these exclusions it would be difficult to assign. The spirit of the new government was however soon perceptible. Addison was appointed their Secretary, and Bolingbroke, who had so long laboured to attain supreme power, and had so lately reached it, was now seen waiting with his papers at the door of the council; where many passed him with scorn, who a few days before would have given half their fortunes for his smile. Still further disgrace attended him. On the 28th of August letters arrived from the King, ordering his removal from his post; Shrewsbury, Somerset, and Cowper immediately took the seals, and locked the door of his office.

Aug. 28.

Meeting of
Parliament.

Aug. 1.

The Parliament met on Sunday, the day of the Queen's decease. Sir Thomas Hanmer, the Speaker, being absent, Secretary Bromley proposed

that the House should adjourn to Wednesday, but 1714.
Sir Richard Onslow opposing this delay, as an unnecessary waste of time, it was agreed to adjourn only till the following morning. Three days were occupied in taking the oaths; on the Thursday the Chancellor made a speech to both Houses, in the name of the Lords Justices, announcing the accession, desiring the House of Commons to provide for the several branches of revenue which had expired by the Queen's death, and excusing themselves from saying more, on the ground that they had not received the King's commands.

The Commons now took their tone from Walpole and Onslow, two of the chief Whig members. When Secretary Bromley moved an address to the King, and enlarged on the great loss the nation had sustained, Walpole proposed to add "something more substantial than words, by giving assurances of making good all parliamentary funds." An addition to this effect was accordingly made.

When the civil list came to be voted, the Tories, under pretence of zeal, proposed to give the King Civil List.
1,000,000*l.*, instead of 700,000*l.*, the revenue enjoyed by Queen Anne; but the Whigs refusing to support the proposition, it was dropped. It is curious that a similar artifice was resorted to by the Tories at the commencement of the reign of King William, when they maintained that he had a

1714: right to the revenue settled on James the Second. In neither case does this shallow stratagem appear to have had any success. The bill for the revenue passed with two new clauses; one for paying the arrears of the Hanover troops, formerly a great bone of contention between Harley and St. John; and the other for granting 100,000*l.* to any one who should apprehend the Pretender, if he should attempt to land in the British dominions. Parliament was then prorogued.

All eyes were now turned towards Hanover. The Elector had so far acted wisely, that he had not given any discouragement to either party. The two ministers Bernsdorf and Gortz, the former of whom had been in favour of the succession, and the latter against it, espoused, after the demise, the former the Whig, and the latter the Tory side.* Lord Strafford had always kept up a correspondence with Hanover, and Lord Clarendon, a person of the meanest capacity, who was sent as envoy extraordinary, just before the death of the Queen, was received by the Elector with assurances of his full confidence in the Queen's promises, and his total ignorance of the demand of a writ for the Duke of Cambridge. By language of this kind, the hopes of the Tories had been kept

* Walpole Papers. Horace Walpole to Mr. Etough.

up, and when the death of the Queen came like a 1714.
thunderbolt falling upon their party, they clung,
in the total absence of method and preparation,
to the kind words of the court of Hanover, as a
foundation for their dependence on real credit and
substantial power under the new government.*
Halifax is said to have kept alive these expecta-
tions, by projecting a kind of mixed administration,
in which Mr. Bromley and Sir Thomas Hanmer
were to have had high situations. But all such
projects were soon scattered into air. The new
King, on his arrival at the Hague, upon the sug-
gestion of Bothmar, appointed Lord Townshend
Secretary of State, with the power of naming his
colleague. Mr. Stanhope was chosen, by the ad-
vice of Horace Walpole, for this situation. Lord
Townshend, who was thus raised to so conspicuous
a situation, was of a Tory family; his father had
been created a peer by Charles the Second. On
first coming into the House of Lords, in 1696, he
had voted with the Tories, but soon attached him-
self to Somers, and became a warm partizan of the
Whigs. He was named joint-plenipotentiary with
the Duke of Marlborough to open the conferences
at Gertruydenberg, and afterwards concluded the
barrier treaty at the Hague, for which he was
attacked by the Tory ministers. He had the cha-

* Letter to Wyndham.

1714. racter of being an able man of business, well versed in negotiations, an ungraceful and perplexed, but sensible speaker, rough in manners, hot in temper, too fond of bold experiments in politics, but honest and honourable in the extreme. He had lately married the sister of Mr. Robert Walpole.

Landing of
George the
First.
Sept 18.

On the 18th of September, about seven weeks after the death of the Queen, George the First landed at Greenwich. The chief persons in the kingdom crowded to pay their court, and explore in the countenance and manner of their new sovereign, the stamp of their fate, and the termination of their hopes and fears. Lord Harcourt, who arrived with a patent for the peerage of the Prince of Wales, was abruptly dismissed; the Duke of Ormond, who was hastening to Greenwich, was forbidden to appear in the royal presence, and Lord Oxford, who had shown more joy in proclaiming the King, than his friends thought respectful towards the late Queen, was barely admitted in the crowd to kiss the King's hand.

New mi-
nistry ap-
pointed.

The new administration, which had been previously arranged by Townshend, was now officially announced. Lord Halifax was appointed First Lord Commissioner of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer; Lord Cowper, Chancellor; Nottingham, President of the Council; Marlborough, Commander in Chief and Master General

of the Ordnance; Wharton, who was made a Marquis, Lord Privy Seal; Orford, First Lord of the Admiralty; Shrewsbury, Lord Chamberlain and Groom of the Stole; the Duke of Devonshire, Lord Steward of the Household; Somerset, Master of the Horse; Sunderland, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland; Walpole, Paymaster of the Forces, with the management of the House of Commons. 1714.

In this arrangement it will be seen, that nearly all the principal offices, both of the ministry and of the household, were occupied by the Whigs. Shrewsbury was the only one of the late Queen's ministers who was retained by the King, and Nottingham, the only decided Tory, who was placed in a high office. The new cabinet consisted of the principal members of the administration, with the addition of Somers, whose infirmities did not permit him to take any active department. Lord Sunderland was much disappointed at being excluded from the management of affairs at home, and his father-in-law, Marlborough, was scarcely less displeased at finding himself of little weight in the administration.*

* His Duchess, whose opinions on political matters were always much sounder than his own, had strongly advised him not to take any part in the new government. See an admirable letter of her's on this subject in Coxe's Marlborough, vol. iii.

1714. The policy of George the First, in putting his government so completely in the hands of the Whigs, has formed a fruitful theme of invective, especially on the part of those who were excluded, against the blindness of the Prince, and the persecution of party. But these invectives have little solid foundation. The Elector of Hanover knew perfectly well that the Whigs were the unchangeable friends of his succession; and what could be more natural than to assemble them round his throne, and arm them with the means of defending it? On the other hand, he knew equally well, that half the Tories had been wavering between his title and that of his rival: to entrust his government to their hands, therefore, would clearly have been a mark of singular imprudence. Indeed it could scarcely have been insisted upon, even by the Tories, that they, the friends of hereditary succession, should have been called to the councils of the elective Sovereign, while the Whigs, the strenuous defenders of a parliamentary title, were excluded. As to the plan of forming an administration composed of the two parties, the violence of the late disputes in Parliament, the indignation of the Whigs at the Treaty of Utrecht, and the opposite principles of government on which the two parties acted, made it totally impossible. If the King had seriously attempted such a coalition,

he would have been abandoned by the whole Whig party. 1715.

So far then, George the First may be considered as having acted wisely. Whether the Tory leaders should have been prosecuted, is another, and very different question. The intentions of the ministers on this subject, were partly made known by the King's proclamation for calling a new Parliament. After expressing his concern at the difficulties in which he found the public affairs, the King openly avows a hope, that the people will elect such persons "as showed a firmness to the Protestant succession when it was in danger." This language could not be mistaken.

The elections went greatly in favour of the Whigs, and a large majority of that party were returned. It will appear singular, that such should have been the result of an appeal to the people two years after a general election, at which five-sixths of the successful candidates had been Tories. The influence of the crown, the discredit which had attached to the late ministry, and the loyal disposition of the people, afford, however, a sufficient solution of this problem. Elections.

The new Parliament met on the 19th of March, 1715, when Mr. Spencer Compton, proposed by the ministers, was chosen Speaker. The King, in his speech, lamented that many essential conditions

March
19th, 1715.
Meeting of
Parliament.
King's
Speech.

1715. of the late peace had not been performed, and pointed out the necessity of defensive alliances, in order to insure their execution; he regretted the injuries suffered by trade, and observed with surprise, that the public debt had been increased since the peace. He likewise remarked, that the Pretender boasted of the assistance he expected to derive from England, and that he was still permitted to reside in Lorraine. He concluded, by declaring his resolution to make the constitution in church and state the rule of his government, and to devote the chief care of his life to the happiness, ease, and prosperity of his people.

Address of
the Com-
mons.

The addresses of both houses spoke in strong terms of the dishonour of the peace, and the delinquency of the late ministers. But the address of the Commons was by far the stronger of the two. "We are sensibly touched," they declared, "not only with the disappointment, but the reproach brought upon the nation, by the unsuitable conclusion of a war which was carried on at so vast an expence, and was attended with such unparalleled successes: but as that dishonour cannot in justice be imputed to the whole nation, so we firmly hope and believe, that through your Majesty's great wisdom, and the faithful endeavours of your Commons, the reputation of your kingdoms will, in due time, be vindicated and restored."

Speaking of the Pretender, they said, “ It is with 1715.
just resentment we observe, that the Pretender
still lives in Lorraine, and that he has the pre-
sumption, by declarations from thence, to stir up
your Majesty’s subjects to rebellion. But that
which raises the utmost indignation of your Com-
mons is, that it appears therein that his hopes
were built upon the measures that had been taken
for some time past in Great Britain. It shall be
our business to trace out those measures, wherein
he places his hopes, and to bring the authors of
them to condign punishment.”

The passages in the King’s speech, and in the Manifesto
addresses, speaking of the assistance which the of the Pre-
Pretender expected to receive from England, tender.
alluded to a paragraph in a manifesto issued by
him, dated August 29, 1714, and sent to some of Aug. 29,
the principal ministers in England, expressed in 1714.
these words: “ Upon the death of the Princess,
our sister, of whose good intentions towards us,
we could not, for sometime past, well doubt; and
this was the reason we then sate still, expecting
the good effects thereof, which were unfortunately
prevented by her deplorable death.” It must be
admitted that, whether true or false, nothing could
be more cruel to his adherents, or more impru-
dent, for his own sake, than the publication of

1715. such a paper, without any attempt to support it by deeds.

Soon after the meeting of parliament, Sir William Wyndham attacked the proclamation for calling a new Parliament, which he said, "was not only unprecedented and unwarrantable, but dangerous to the very being of Parliaments." Being called upon to explain himself more fully, he said, "Every member was free to speak his thoughts." Upon his again refusing to explain himself, some members cried out, "The Tower, the Tower!" But Walpole getting up, said, "Mr. Speaker, I am not for gratifying the desire which the member who occasions this debate shows, of being sent to the Tower. It would make him too considerable." After this sensible speech, the house having first obliged Sir William Wyndham to withdraw, resolved that he should be reprimanded by the Speaker.

The menaces held forth in the address of the House of Commons were not long suffered to sleep. The papers of Bolingbroke, Strafford, and Prior having been seized, Secretary Stanhope presented to the House of Commons those which were deemed of importance, and a Committee of Secrecy was appointed to examine if they afforded any just cause of impeachment. Sometime after-

wards Shippen, an honest and consistent friend of 1715.
 the exiled family, having insinuated that, notwithstanding the clamour which had been raised against the late ministry, the secret committee would never be able to bring any proof of their guilt, Walpole, who was their chairman, replied, that so far was this from being true, that he wanted words to express the villainy of the late Frenchified ministry. On the 9th of June, two months after the appointment of the committee, Walpole presented the report, which he continued reading without interruption for five hours. When he had concluded, Sir T. Hanmer and his friends moved that the report be printed, and the farther consideration postponed to the 21st. But Walpole opposed this proposal; and being supported by Secretary Stanhope, the motion of Sir T. Hanmer was negatived on a division, by two hundred and eighty to one hundred and sixty. It must be confessed that the rejection of this reasonable motion showed a desire to precipitate accusation, which savoured more of passion than of justice. Walpole then rose again to impeach Lord Bolingbroke of high treason, and other high crimes and misdemeanours; saying at the same time, that if any member had any thing to say in his behalf, he had no doubt the House was ready

Report of
 the Com-
 mittee of
 Secrecy.
 June 9th.

1715. to hear him. A deep silence ensued for some minutes, upon which Mr. Hungerford said, that in his opinion nothing was mentioned in the report relating to Lord Bolingbroke, amounting to the crime of high treason. After a short remark from another member, the vote for an impeachment passed without a division. Thus unsupported was Bolingbroke, in the House of Commons, which he had triumphantly led when pursuing that very course of conduct for which he was now impeached! Lord Coningsby then rose and said, “The worthy chairman of the committee has impeached the hand, but I impeach the head; he has impeached the clerk, and I the justice; he has impeached the scholar, and I the master: I impeach Robert Earl of Oxford and Earl Mortimer of high treason, and other high crimes and misdemeanours.” Mr. Auditor Harley and Mr. Foley, Lord Oxford’s brother-in-law, spoke in favour of their relation; and Sir Joseph Jekyll, who had been on the committee of secrecy, said, that although they had more than sufficient evidence to convict Lord Bolingbroke of high treason, he doubted whether they had sufficient to convict Lord Oxford. Another member however, stating, that they had besides the papers some *vivâ voce* evidence to bring forward, the vote passed, and the committee of secrecy were ordered to

Impeachment of Bolingbroke and Oxford.

prepare articles of impeachment against the two 1715.
lords accused.

The report of the secret committee consisted almost entirely of details relating to the peace of Utrecht. As these details belong properly to the history of a former period, I shall only say that the report, supported by papers now first brought to light, affirmed that, in contravention of the article of the treaty of the general alliance, which stipulated that no treaty should be made with France, except in conjunction with all the allies, the late ministers had negotiated and signed separate preliminaries of peace, while they pretended in Holland that they were observing the terms of the alliance. In proof of this charge were brought forward the clandestine negotiations with Menager; the separate articles signed by Lord Bolingbroke and Lord Dartmouth; the suspension of arms; the seizure of Ghent and Bruges; the Duke of Ormond's acting in concert with the French general; Lord Bolingbroke's journey to France; and the precipitate conclusion of the peace of Utrecht, by which the Spanish monarchy was delivered into the hands of a prince of the House of Bourbon. The affairs of Dunkirk and the Assiento were reserved by the committee for a separate report.

To say whether or no the ministers were justifi-

1715. fied in this extreme prosecution of their predecessors, is a question of some difficulty. On the one hand it might be urged, that the negotiations bore decisive testimony of a collusion existing between the late ministry and the French, to the prejudice of the allies, at whose side we had so long fought; that the nation demanded some atonement for the hasty sacrifice, by the cessation of arms, of the glory and honour we had acquired by so many victories; that the allies, whom the late ministry had betrayed, would never more put any faith in us, unless the ministry were carefully distinguished from the nation, and made to afford, by their signal punishment, a proof that the people of England abhorred their conduct; that as the prerogative of making peace and war gave a discretion to the ministers almost unbounded, so much the more necessary was it to punish every instance of abuse; that it could hardly be denied, many of the late ministry were prepared to bring in the Pretender, and might still attempt it, if a check were not put to their machinations, by a strict and fearless exercise of the ancient right of punishing wicked and pernicious counsellors.

On the other hand it might be said, that even granting the conduct of the late ministers to have

been blameable, yet the approbation of two successive parliaments, and the tacit acquiescence of the nation, gave them a title to indemnity. The negotiations, which were now blazoned forth in the report of the secret committee, had been tolerably well known from the time of their taking place, and the alleged intercourse with the Pretender was by no means proved, in a manner to afford solid ground of accusation. Peace, it was well known, was the desire of a great part of the nation; and in giving effect to those wishes, the ministers had honestly and conscientiously pursued what they, and the ruling party in parliament, thought the true interest of the kingdom. If every ministry were thus to prosecute their predecessors, because they did not agree in their opinions, the country would soon become a scene of disorder and vengeance, similar to the wildest and most turbulent democracies. Allowing, however, still further, that cases may sometimes occur where measures approved by successive parliaments may become matter of accusation, nothing short of the strongest necessity can justify such a proceeding. But in this case sound policy, far from urging the prosecution, was decidedly opposed to it. The Tories, evidently routed and discomfited, were broken, disheartened, and divided.

1715. They had permitted every office and authority to fall into the hands of the Whigs without a shadow of resistance. To throw the fire of a prosecution into this dead mass, would be to rekindle flames that were extinct, and rouse a spirit which required only vigour and concentration, to become once more formidable.

The reasons against the prosecution, which I confess appear to me the strongest, were not however sufficient to moderate the course of the Whig ministry. The violence of party feeling at so critical a moment, and the recollection of the danger they had just escaped, were probably their ruling motives; less charitable observers, however, attributed their conduct to a desire of pushing their adversaries into the arms of the Pretender, and securing their own favour with the King, as the exclusive friends of the House of Hanover.

Flight of
Boling-
broke.

The behaviour of the two principal persons under accusation at this juncture, was very different. Bolingbroke, who, on the Queen's death, had been very confident; who had boasted to one of his friends that in two months he would make the Whigs pass for Jacobites,* and who, by the

* Letter to Swift, in Swift's Works.

advice of Lord Trevor, had appeared very forward 1715.
in Parliament, found his boldness greatly diminish
when the strength of the new ministry became
manifest. As things assumed a more threatening
aspect, his resolution began still more to fail, and
at length, considering the accusation against him
might take a serious turn, he determined upon
retiring to France. In pursuance of this scheme,
after appearing one evening publicly at Drury
Lane theatre, and bespeaking a play for the next
night, he went off in the disguise of servant of
one of the French messengers, to Dover, and there
hired a vessel which carried him to Calais. He
wrote from Dover a letter to a friend, in which he
says, "I had certain and repeated informations
from some, who are in the secret of affairs, that a
resolution was taken, by those who have power to
execute it, to pursue me to the scaffold. My
blood was to have been the cement of a new alli-
ance. Had there been the least reason to hope
for a fair and open trial, after having been already
prejudged, unheard, by the two Houses of Par-
liament, I should not have declined the strictest
examination. I challenge the most inveterate of
my enemies to produce any one instance of crimi-
nal correspondence, or the least corruption in any
part of the administration in which I was con-

1715. cerned. It is a comfort that will remain with me, in all misfortunes, that I served her Majesty faithfully and dutifully, in that especially, which she had most at heart, relieving her people from a bloody and expensive war; and that I have always been too much an Englishman to sacrifice the interest of my country to any foreign ally whatsoever."

Conduct of
Oxford.

The Earl of Oxford, on the other hand, who had skulked about uneasy and alarmed, from the time of the King's landing, appeared, and took his seat in the House of Lords two days after the appointment of the Secret Committee. The day after the resolution to impeach him, he attended in his place, and seemed at first undisturbed, but finding that most of the peers avoided him, and that even Lord Poulett was shy of exchanging a few words with him, he left the House.

Articles of
impeach-
ment
against
him,
July 8.

On the 8th of July, the articles of impeachment against Lord Oxford, being prepared by the Committee of Secrecy, were read in the House of Commons. The first ten, which related to the negotiations for a separate peace, deceiving the Dutch, and the suspension of arms, were agreed to by the House. The eleventh article charged Lord Oxford with "traiterously aiding, assisting, and adhering to the French King," while the war

still continued between France and England, and 1715.
averred, that he “maliciously, falsely, and trait-
terously, did counsel and advise the said enemy
in what manner, and by what methods the im-
portant town of Tournay, then in possession of
the States General, might be gained from them to
the French King.”

The other articles had been voted to be high crimes and misdemeanours, but this was charged as high treason. Upon this question a great debate arose. Sir Robert Raymond, Mr. Bromley, Sir William Wyndham, Auditors Harley and Foley, Mr. Ward and Mr. Hungerford, maintained that the offence, if proved, did not amount to high treason, and were supported by Sir Joseph Jekyll, who being a member of the Committee of Secrecy, a lawyer, and a Whig, great weight attached to his opinion. Walpole answered him with some warmth, that there were, both in and out of the Committee of Secrecy, several persons who did not in the least yield to the member who spoke last, in point of honesty, and who, without derogating from his merit, were superior to him in the knowledge of the laws, but who at the same time were satisfied, that the charge specified in the eleventh article amounted to treason. The vote was agreed to by a majority of 247 to 147; and

1715. the rest of the articles being carried, Lord Coningsby and a great number of members went with the impeachment to the House of Lords.

His speech
in the
House of
Lords.

Upon the question that the Earl of Oxford be committed to safe custody in the Tower, Lord Oxford himself rose, and spoke in his own defence as follows: " My Lords; It is a very great misfortune for any man to fall under the displeasure of so great and powerful a body as the Commons of Great Britain; and this misfortune is the heavier upon me, because I had the honour to be placed at the head of the late ministry, and must now, it seems, be made accountable for all the measures that were then pursued. But, on the other hand, it is a very great comfort to me under this misfortune, that I have the honour to be a member of this august assembly; an assembly, which always squares their proceedings and judgments by the rules of honour, justice, and equity; and is not to be biassed by a spirit of party.

" My Lords; I could say a great deal to clear myself of the charge which is brought against me; but as I now labour under an indisposition of body, besides the fatigue of this long sitting, I shall contract what I have to say in a narrow compass. This whole accusation may, it seems, be reduced to the negotiation and conclusion of

the peace. That the nation wanted a peace, nobody will deny; and, I hope it will be as easily made out, that the conditions of this peace are as good as could be expected, considering the circumstances wherein it was made, and the backwardness and reluctancy which some of the allies showed to come into the Queen's measures. This is certain, that this peace, as bad as it is now represented, was approved by two successive parliaments. It is, indeed, suggested against this peace, that it was a separate one; but I hope, my Lords, it will be made appear, that it was general; and that it was France, and not Great Britain, that made the first step towards a negotiation. And, my Lords, I will be bold to say, that during my whole administration, the sovereign upon the throne was loved at home, and feared abroad.

“As to the business of Tournay, which is made a capital charge, I can safely aver, that I had no manner of share in it; and that the same was wholly transacted by that unfortunate nobleman who thought fit to step aside; but I dare say in his behalf, that if this charge could be proved, it would not amount to treason. For my own part, as I have always acted by the immediate directions and commands of the late Queen, and never offended against any known law, I am justified in

1715. my own conscience, and unconcerned for the life of an insignificant old man. But I cannot, without the highest ingratitude, be unconcerned for the best of Queens; a Queen who heaped upon me honours and preferments, though I never asked for them; and therefore I think myself under an obligation to vindicate her memory, and the measures she pursued, with my dying breath.

“ My Lords; If ministers of state, acting by the immediate commands of their sovereign, are afterwards to be made accountable for their proceedings, it may one day or other be the case of all the members of this august assembly: I do not doubt, therefore, that out of regard to yourselves, your Lordships will give me an equitable hearing; and I hope that, in the prosecution of this inquiry, it will appear, that I have merited not only the indulgence, but likewise the favour of the government.

“ My Lords; I am now to take my leave of your Lordships, and of this honourable House, perhaps for ever! I shall lay down my life with pleasure, in a cause favoured by my late dear royal mistress. And, when I consider that I am to be judged by the justice, honour, and virtue of my peers, I shall acquiesce, and retire with great content: and, my Lords, God’s will be done.”

Lord Oxford, when he had finished his speech, 1715¹ was allowed to go to his own house, on account of indisposition. On his way home he was attended by a mob, who cried out, “High Church, Ormond and Oxford for ever!”

The question, whether the accusation against Oxford, respecting Tournay, amounted to treason, is one of some interest and curiosity. Technically speaking, undoubtedly, a charge of assisting a power, with whom England was then at war, in obtaining possession of a town held by an ally, may be said to come within the statute of Edward the Third; but if we pass from the letter to the spirit of that law, the question to be asked is, whether Lord Oxford really intended to serve the French against his own country, or whether, he conceived the surrender of Tournay beneficial to the interests of the crown and of the nation? And if this latter interpretation be adopted, which I think it ought to be, it must then be considered as a very unfair construction of the statute of treason, to impeach Lord Oxford of that crime. It has been said, that Walpole privately entertained an opinion against the proceeding, but for his honour it is to be hoped this report was false. On the next day, Lord Oxford was allowed a month to

1715. answer the articles of the impeachment. Dr. Mead, one of his physicians, made an affidavit, that if the Earl was sent to the Tower, his life would be in danger; notwithstanding which it was voted that he should be sent to the Tower the following morning.

He is sent
to the
Tower.

Lord Oxford was the next day carried to the Tower in his own carriage, followed by two hackney coaches, containing Lady Oxford, his son Lord Harley, and some others of his relations. They were attended by great numbers of the common people; and on the return of the carriages a tumult ensued, and three or four persons were carried by the constables to the round-house.

Sept. 3d.

Lord Oxford did not give in his answer to the articles of impeachment till the 3rd of September. It consisted chiefly of a long and laboured defence of the peace of Utrecht from the censures which had been cast upon it. At the same time, an endeavour was made to prove that the Dutch had not been misled by any false representations on the part of the English ministry; and that the preliminaries, which had been signed with the French government, were not in truth the arrangements for a separate peace, but merely articles of agreement between the belligerent powers, intended to take effect only in the case of the con-

clusion of a general peace. Walpole attacked this 1715.
 answer with great warmth in the House of Com-
 mons, and a replication on the part of the Com-
 mons was carried up to the House of Lords.

In the mean time the ministers had proceeded to other impeachments. The Duke of Ormond, The Duke
of Ormond.
 who, as we have seen, entered during the latter
 part of the reign of Queen Anne into the cabals
 for bringing in the Pretender, rendered himself
 obnoxious to prosecution at this time by his im-
 prudent and vain conduct. He affected to have
 his levee crowded with people of rank; he coun-
 tenanced the mob in crying Ormond for ever; he
 dispersed a printed paper to justify his conduct
 before he was attacked; and he endeavoured to
 excite an interest by spreading a report, that three
 persons in disguise, had stopt the Duchess of Or-
 mond in her carriage, and seemed to have a design
 upon his life. Excited by these bravadoes, Secre-
 tary Stanhope on the 21st of June, moved an im-
 peachment against him. Impeached.
 The reputation of the
 Duke of Ormond for unsullied honour procured
 him warmer defenders than had appeared for Bo-
 lingbroke and Oxford; General Lumley in par-
 ticular, reminded the House of his gallant beha-
 viour at the battle of Landon, where he had been
 wounded, and adduced the testimony of King

1715. William in his behalf. He was supported by Sir J. Jekyll, who said, that “if there was room for mercy, he hoped it would be shown to that noble, generous, and courageous peer, who for many years exerted those accomplishments for the good of his country.” But his encouragement of the late riots was urged in reply, to all that could be said of his former conduct, and after a long debate, it was resolved to impeach him of high treason; but by a majority of no more than forty-seven.

It is said that at this moment Ormond wrote a submissive letter to the King, who agreed to give him a private audience; and it is probable, that with the general feeling in his favour, the impeachment would not have been persisted in, if he had consented to remain quiet; but instigated by an inordinate sense of his own importance, and the inflaming counsels of Bishop Atterbury and other Jacobites, he left England and immediately joined the Pretender.

Joins the
Pretender.

On the day following the impeachment of Ormond, the House of Commons, on the motion of Mr. Aislachie, agreed to impeach Lord Strafford of high crimes and misdemeanours. In the course of the debate, General Cadogan, speaking of the cessation of arms, said the confederates had thereby lost the fairest opportunity they ever had had, of

destroying the enemy's army, and penetrating into the very heart of France. It should ever be kept in mind that the remembrance of the glory missed at that time, was deeply engraved in the hearts of the Whigs, and, more than any thing else, animated their present proceedings.

END OF VOL. I.

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